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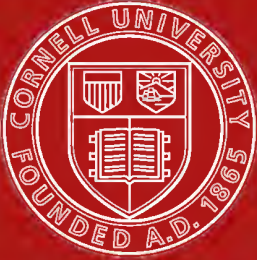
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THE WAR  
IN  
EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.











CAPTAIN LORD CHARLES W. BERESFORD, C.B., R.N.

1890-1891

# THE WAR IN EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN

AN EPISODE IN  
THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE;

BEING  
A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE SCENES AND EVENTS OF THAT GREAT DRAMA,  
AND SKETCHES OF THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN IT.

BY  
THOMAS ARCHER, F.R.H.S.,  
AUTHOR OF "FIFTY YEARS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS,  
"PICTURES AND ROYAL PORTRAITS," ETC.

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VOLUME IV.

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## P R E F A C E.

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A friendly reviewer referred to a previous work of the writer of these lines as "the essence of ten thousand newspapers." That phrase would have been even more applicable to the volumes now before the reader.

The story of British intervention in Egypt and the Soudan, while its importance should raise it to the dignity of history, could only be written, so far as the later portion of it was concerned, after assiduous and laborious reference to a multitude of current accounts and a mass of official despatches and non-official but yet authoritative correspondence.

The occurrences of to-day were to be woven into the history of yesterday; and after the introductory pages, which were more truly historical, and were necessary to account for the immediate situation, and to show the occasion of the attitude which Britain sustained towards Egypt, the whole story has necessarily been a chronicle of events so recent that they had not come into any historical form whatever before these volumes were issued.

The writer had to bring forward what may be called a living history of a remarkable national episode, and to preserve at once the dramatic interest and the complete accuracy of the narrative. The events that he had to portray and the scenes he had to depict were too recent to have found a place in books of reference or the volumes of circulating libraries: he was therefore confronted by an almost appalling mass of what may be called the material of history; bales and skeins of the warp and woof that had to be woven into a continuous, consecutive, and attractive narrative,

containing a good deal of information on subjects that required to be relieved by a considerable variety of striking colour.

To write a complete story of the war in Egypt and the Soudan with such descriptive accounts, sketches of persons and scenes, explanations of financial and administrative changes, and narratives of successive events as would make a comprehensive and trustworthy as well as a popular history, was not rendered difficult because of the lack of sources of information. The real difficulty was in the profusion of material, which had to be examined, assorted, compared, selected, and wrought into suitable form.

It is not for the writer to say that he has succeeded in the endeavour to make the following pages contain accurate and complete information, and to be at the same time easy and interesting to the reader. He has not spared effort, and he has already the happiness of knowing that, when three out of the four volumes were issued, they were well received and spoken of by competent critics and reviewers in terms which should suffice to make him grateful, and to sustain the hope (already largely realized) for an equally favourable and friendly greeting from thousands of readers, not only in this country, but in those great Colonies which are so closely and inseparably a portion of the British Empire, that the instant the call to arms was heard within their townships or on their remoter borders efficient contingents of trained and trusty men were ready and eager to share the hardships and the perils of the campaign.

LONDON, *February, 1887.*



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# THE WAR

IN

## EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.

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### CHAPTER VIII.

Story of the Fight for the Nile. Abu-Klea. A Night March. Sighting the Enemy. The Seriba. Battle of Gubat. Sir Herbert Stewart Wounded. Cameron and St. Leger Herbert Killed. A Desperate Struggle. Return to Abu-Kru. Advance to Metammeh. Gordon's Steamers. A Forlorn Hope. Sir Charles Wilson embarks for Khartûm. The Voyage to Omdurman. A Queer Crew. Steaming under Fire. In Sight of Khartûm. Ominous Signs. Too Late! In the Hands of the Mahdi. Retreat of the Boats. Advance of River Column. Battle of Kirbekan.

WE have already dwelt with some emphasis on the attitude maintained by the government in defence of their policy, and it is not further necessary to the present narrative to record the various contentions which were taking place in and out of parliament in reference to political consistency and the efficacy of the expedition which had been ordered to the Soudan for the rescue or relief of Gordon at Khartûm. Subsequently,—that is to say in the light of after events,—there were people who strongly declared that a considerably larger force should have been despatched at a much earlier period; others as distinctly affirmed that if the government had been consistent no expedition need have been despatched at all, but that the present force would have been sufficient in number and equipments if the rescue had been possible at the time when it could alone be decided that an interposition was to be exercised. At any rate we have seen that the preparations made were designed to meet all the physical difficulties that would be likely to be encountered, and that from the first the only question was whether it would be possible to reach Khartûm in time to effect the primary object of the enterprise. That object was the rescue of General



Gordon and Colonel Stewart. The latter, as we know, and as the officers and men of the expedition knew before they reached Korti, had been foully murdered, and Gordon was alone, in imminent danger of falling a victim to the fanatic pretender whose hordes were slowly closing on the city. Then it was understood by the men who marched across the Bayûda, the men who were to make their way up the Nile to meet them, and those few who were to remain at Korti till the general was prepared to advance and command the entire force at the storming of Khartûm, that there was a death to avenge and a life to save.

"The primary object of the expedition up the valley of the Nile," said the instructions given to Lord Wolseley before he left Cairo, "is to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart from Khartûm. When that object has been secured, no further offensive operations of any kind are to be undertaken. Although you are not precluded from advancing as far as Khartûm should you consider such a step essential to ensure the safe retreat of General Gordon and Colonel Stewart, you should bear in mind that her majesty's government is desirous to limit the sphere of your military operations as much as possible. They rely on you, therefore, not to advance further southwards than is absolutely necessary in order to attain the primary object of the expedition. . . . You are aware that the policy of her majesty's government is that Egyptian rule in the Soudan should cease. It is desirable that you should receive general instructions as to two points which necessarily arise in connection with the method of carrying this policy into execution. These are (1) the steps to be taken to ensure the safe retreat of the Egyptian troops and civil employés; (2) the policy to be adopted in respect to the future government of the Soudan, and especially of Khartûm. The negotiations with the tribes for endeavouring to secure the safe retreat of the garrison of Kassala may be treated from Suakim and Massowa. You need not, therefore, take any steps in connection with this branch of the subject. The position of the garrisons at Darfûr, the Bahr-el-Gazelle, and Equatorial provinces renders it impossible that you should take any action which would facilitate their retreat without

extending your operations far beyond the sphere which her majesty's government is prepared to sanction. As regards the Sennâr garrison, her majesty's government is not prepared to sanction the despatch of an expedition of British troops up the Blue Nile in order to secure its retreat. From the last telegrams received from General Gordon, there is reason to hope that he has already taken steps to withdraw the Egyptian portion of the Sennâr garrison. You will use your best endeavours to ensure the safe retreat of the Egyptian troops which constitute the Khartûm garrison, and of such of the civil employés of Khartûm, together with their families, as may wish to return to Egypt.

"As regards the future government of the Soudan and especially of Khartûm, her majesty's government would be glad to see a government at Khartûm which, so far as all matters connected with the internal administration of the country is concerned, would be wholly independent of Egypt. The Egyptian government would be prepared to pay a reasonable subsidy to any chief or number of chiefs who would be sufficiently powerful to maintain order along the valley of the Nile from Wady Halfa to Khartûm, and who would agree to the following conditions:—

"1. To remain at peace with Egypt, and to repress any raids on Egyptian territory. 2. To encourage trade with Egypt. 3. To prevent and discourage by all possible means any expeditions for the sale of and capture of slaves."

How strangely these general orders read now! How strangely they must have read even at the time that the two columns were preparing to start from Korti on a march which had already become a fight, not only against the enemy and against the physical obstructions of the desert and the rapids, but against time. The irony of events had made the guarded and almost apprehensive precision with which the government repeated their political formula nearly as ludicrous as their obvious want of knowledge of the actual conditions with which they had reluctantly consented to deal only from their own point of view, whence they saw little or nothing of the real situation.

Lord Wolseley was authorized to conclude any arrangements

which would fulfil the general conditions laid down in these instructions, which went on to say, with what appears now to be sadly amusing solemnity:—"The main difficulty will consist in the selection of an individual or a number of individuals having sufficient authority to maintain order. You will, of course, bear in mind that any ruler established south of Wady Halfa will have to rely solely on his own strength in order to maintain his position. . . . Under certain conditions the Egyptian government would be prepared to pay a moderate subsidy in order to secure tranquillity and fairly good government in the valley of the Nile. Beyond the adoption of this measure neither her majesty's government nor the Egyptian government are prepared to assume any responsibility whatsoever for the government of the Nile valley south of Wady Halfa."

Even with the knowledge which we have acquired from the present narrative—up to the period of the marching of the "desert column" on the way to Metammeh—we read these instructions with a feeling of surprise—almost of pity; but we must remember that having arrived at this point we are more than two months ahead of the date when these general instructions were sent to Lord Wolseley at Cairo, and at that time the majority of people in England were looking forward to the smashing of the Mahdi and a victorious march of British troops into Khartûm for the rescue of Gordon, while others, hearing of steamers sent by Gordon to Shendy, were saying that if Wolseley did not take care what he was about it would be he who would have to be rescued by Gordon. Such were the vague notions and general want of an accurate estimate of the situation while Stewart and Wilson were advancing to Abu-Klea and Brackenbury was pushing forward to Handab, the first rendezvous for the Nile column.

To the first of these—the march from Korti to Metammeh—we will now for a moment return, for to that "desert column," as it was called, immediate steps for the rescue of Gordon had been intrusted, and we have briefly diverged from the story of their arrival at Gakdul to tell of the message that reached England of the ensuing engagement at Abu-Klea.

On the 30th of December Sir Herbert Stewart had as a preliminary movement taken the camel corps to occupy the wells at Gakdul, which were not much less than half of the journey across the Bayûda. The Guards Camel Corps, which had been inspected at Dongola by Lord Wolseley, presented a very imposing appearance. Two hundred stalwart men, wearing their scarlet tunics, thoroughly equipped, and mounted on camels over which they had complete control, somewhat astonished the Turkish officers on the staff of the mudir; and as they filed off in a long line towards the desert, they were evidently fit for the immediate service which they were called upon to undertake. The column was preceded by thirty-four men of the 19th Hussars to act as scouts in advance. These were followed by the Guard Camel Corps, some 380 men and 650 camels belonging to the light and heavy divisions of the camel corps and artillery. The men of these divisions having been temporarily dismounted remained behind, their camels, as well as 500 transport camels, being loaded with provisions and stores. The mounted infantry, 387 strong, brought up the rear. The guards were to be dismounted at Gakdul and were to remain in charge of the stores, while their camels returned to Korti along with those of the other camel corps and the transport, so that the men of the light and the heavy camel corps and of the artillery might be remounted, and the camels of the transport and guards be loaded up again with provisions and with the stores of the Sussex Regiment, which was to accompany the second column to Gakdul. Of course the progress of the expedition from Gakdul to Metammeh would depend on the situation and intentions of the enemy, and of the disposition of the Hassan Ayob tribe, through whose country the column would have to pass. The men who were ordered on service with the first column were in high spirits, and envied "for their luck" by those who were left behind. The preparations kept the camp in commotion, which only subsided as the time approached for the assembly of the force. The camels once laden ceased to groan and scream, and stalked off to the ground marked off for them, presently followed by the guards corps and the

mounted infantry. The baggage camels were arranged in column with from twenty to thirty marching abreast, and with fifty yards interval between each troop. The guards in front and the mounted infantry in rear were in close column of companies ready to dismount and form a square at a moment's notice. Lord Wolseley inspected the whole force, and the little party of cavalry scouts, under Major Kitchener, with six Arab guides, moved off in front. A quarter of an hour later the general gave the order, and the great column got in motion, striking straight across the undulating plain towards the distant horizon, the two thousand camels with their necks stretched out, and their long legs moving slowly in apparently mechanical strides, until the rising dust enveloped them and all that followed in a gray mist, and finally hid from view the whole column, which, broad as was its face, extended for a mile in length. No natives accompanied the column, except the guides who went with the hussar scouts, a few others with a guard of mounted infantry in the rear, a few servants from Cairo, and the camel-drivers.

The first regular wells at which the column would arrive were at Hambok, about forty miles distant, and they are merely holes dug in the sand and deepened as the subterranean waters fall, until either the sides cave in, or the whole excavation is obliterated by the rush of water down the wady during the rainy season. The water is mostly drawn from these and all similar wells in the Bayûda by means of rough skin bags, and is then poured into small earthen cisterns made on the surface, at which camels, sheep, and horses are watered; these wells are rarely more than twenty to twenty-five feet deep.

Near this point, at thirty-eight miles from Ambukol, the wady, which has hitherto been flat and sandy, with very gently sloping sides, becomes much broken, small metamorphic ridges, hills, and lava-like mounds close in, showing that the belt of metamorphic rock intervening between the lower Nubian sandstone and the extensive granite rocks is being traversed. The hills assume curious forms: some, of black basalt, are almost perfectly conical, whilst the rock of which they are composed is so magnetic as



seriously to interfere with the action of the compass in their vicinity; the tops of others are composed of small five or six sided columns, so regular as to resemble artificial paving; others, again, consist of alternate layers of sandstone and lava, and resemble giant fortifications and buildings; whilst all around are strewn globular volcanic bombs of every possible form, hard as glass on the exterior, and when broken found to be filled with sand of different colours. Here, again, are long streams of rock resembling lava which, in cooling, has contracted and divided into regular joints, so that the fossil vertebræ of some enormous beast are closely simulated; whilst, as though carelessly thrown about, here and there are seen the trunks of fossil trees, some of which are as much as thirty to forty feet long. About fifty-five miles from Ambukol are the wells of El Howeiyat, of similar character to those of Hambok, followed by those of Abu Halfa, and next of Gakdul.

On New Year's Day, 1885, the first boats of the Black Watch reached Korti; on the 3d of January General Earle, who had arrived on the 1st, left to join the advanced guard of his river force; and on the 4th the South Staffordshire Regiment passed the cataract and occupied Handab, where the river column was to assemble before going forward. On the 5th Lord Charles Beresford reached Korti with the first division of the Naval Brigade; and on the same day Sir Herbert Stewart, who was not expected back for ten days after the first desert column had marched out to occupy Gakdul, returned, having made such an expeditious journey that he had left the guards' camel regiment in occupation, and was now ready to join them with the second column. The march to Gakdul had been accomplished with great success, and the enemy, taken by surprise, had not ventured an attack. Some prisoners—Awadiyeh Arabs—from the neighbourhood of Metammeh had been brought in, but little information could be obtained from them, except a confirmation of the report that there was a force at Metammeh armed with rifles, and that General Gordon's steamers were on the river below the cataract.

The entire force at Sir Herbert Stewart's disposal consisted

of the first division of the Naval Brigade, 5 officers and 53 non-commissioned officers and men; the 19th Hussars, 9 officers, 121 non-commissioned officers and men; the Heavy Camel Regiment, 24 officers, 376 non-commissioned officers and men; Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, 21 officers, 336 non-commissioned officers and men; Royal Artillery, 4 officers, 39 non-commissioned officers and men; Royal Sussex Regiment, 16 officers, 401 non-commissioned officers and men; Essex Regiment, 3 officers, 55 non-commissioned officers and men; commissariat and transport, 5 officers, 72 non-commissioned officers and men; medical staff, 3 officers, 50 non-commissioned officers and men. In addition to these there were 304 natives, 2228 camels, and 155 horses. Colonel Stanley Clarke's convoy (with Adjutant-captain Paget of the 7th Hussars), en route for Gakdul, consisted of 10 officers and 706 men of the Light Camel Regiment and 1120 camels.

At the wells at Howeiyat were 3 officers, 30 men, and 33 camels of the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, and at Gakdul, 19 officers and 365 men of the Guards' Camel Regiment, 2 officers and 25 men of the royal engineers, and 1 officer and 10 men of the medical staff.

The Guards' Camel Regiment was composed of selected men from the three regiments of guards and the royal marines, with Lieutenant-colonel the Honourable E. E. T. Boscawen of the Coldstream Guards in command, and as adjutant, Lieutenant C. Crutchley of the Scots Guards.

The heavies comprised selected men from the three household and seven other cavalry regiments, commanded by Lieutenant-colonel the Honourable R. A. J. Talbot of the 1st Life Guards, and Adjutant-captain Lord St. Vincent, 16th Lancers. The Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, composed of selected men from various regiments, most of whom had served with the mounted infantry in South Africa or Egypt, was commanded by Major the Honourable G. H. Gough, 14th Hussars. It may be mentioned here that the detachment of the Essex Regiment was left at Howeiyat and the mounted infantry went on with Sir Herbert Stewart's column. On the arrival of the column at Gakdul the

Guards' Camel Regiment was relieved by a strong detachment of the Royal Sussex and went on with the column to Abu-Klea.

The entire force amounted to about 120 officers and 1900 men, and this, of course, included the provisions for transport, the movable field hospital, and the bearer company.

Sir Herbert Stewart's instructions were to proceed to Metammeh after such rest at Gakdul as the animals would require. On reaching Abu-Klea he was to establish a post there garrisoned by 50 to 100 of the Sussex men as might be required, and then to advance on Metammeh, which he was to attack and occupy, probably laagering his convoy at the wells of Shebacat. Leaving the Guards' Camel Regiment, the detachment of the Sussex Regiment, the naval brigade, the detachment of royal engineers, and three guns of the royal artillery at Metammeh, he was to return with the convoy to Gakdul, whence he was to continue to forward stores to Metammeh, when Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, who accompanied the expedition, was to take the command. In fact, Sir Charles Wilson was to continue the immediate operations for the rescue of Gordon, and the instructions given to him by General Wolseley on the 7th of January said:—

“You will accompany the column under the command of Brigadier-general Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., which will leave Korti to-morrow for Metammeh. Your intimate knowledge of Soudan affairs will enable you to be of great use to him during his operations away from these headquarters. You will endeavour to enter into friendly relations with the Hassaniyeh tribe, and to induce them, if possible, to carry supplies for us across the desert, and to sell us sheep, cattle, &c. As soon as Metammeh is in our occupation Sir H. Stewart will despatch a messenger to Korti with an account of his march, &c.; and you will be good enough to send me by same opportunity all political information you may have obtained, all news of General Gordon, the so-called Mahdi, &c. I am sending Captain Lord Charles Beresford, R.N., with a small party of seamen to accompany Sir H. Stewart to Metammeh, where, if there are any steamers, Lord Charles Beresford will take possession of one or two of them as he may think best.

Any Egyptian (fellaheen) soldiers on them can be converted into camel-drivers and come back here with unloaded camels.

As soon as Lord Charles Beresford reports that he is ready to proceed with one or more steamers to Khartûm you will go to that place with him and deliver the inclosed letter to General Gordon. I leave it open so that you may read it.

Orders have been given to Sir H. Stewart to send a small detachment of infantry with you to Khartûm. If you like you can upon arriving there march these men through the city to show the people that British troops are near at hand. If there is any epidemic in town you will not do this. I do not wish them to sleep in the city. They must return with you to Metammeh. You will only stay in Khartûm long enough to confer fully with General Gordon. Having done so you will return with Lord Charles Beresford in steamers to Metammeh.

My letter to General Gordon will explain to you the object of your mission. You will confer with him both upon the military and upon the political position. You are aware of the great difficulty of feeding this army at such a great distance from the sea. You know how we are off in the matter of supplies, the condition and distribution of the troops under my command, the dates when Major-general Earle will be able to move on Abu-Ahmed, &c. I am sending with you the three officers named in the margin,<sup>1</sup> who will accompany you to Khartûm, and will remain there to assist General Gordon until I am able to relieve that place. It is always possible that when Mohamed Achmet fully realizes that an English army is approaching Khartûm he will retreat and thus raise the siege. Khartûm would, under such circumstances, continue to be the political centre of our operations; but Berber would become our military objective. No British troops would be sent to Khartûm beyond a few red-coats in steamers for the purpose of impressing on the inhabitants the fact that it was to the presence of our army they owed their safety.

The siege of Khartûm being thus raised all our military

<sup>1</sup> Major Dickson, Royal Dragoons; Lieutenant Stewart-Wortley, Royal Rifles; the third to be named on arrival at Metammeh.

arrangements would be made with a view to the immediate occupation of Berber, and to march across the desert to Ariab on the Suakim road. Upon arrival at Metammeh, it is very possible you may find papers or letters from General Gordon awaiting us. You will be good enough to send them to me by the first messenger coming here.

Upon your return to Metammeh from Khartûm you will rejoin my headquarters at your earliest possible convenience."

These instructions were accompanied by the following paper from Major-general Sir Redvers Buller, giving the dates referred to in the previous orders.

"Deputy Adjutant-General.

The following is my estimate of approximate times:—

General Earle's force should, with luck, be in a position to commence its forward movement on the 20th January.

The whole of that force should have moved by the 25th January.

It will, I hope, reach Abu-Ahmed about the 10th February, Berber about the 22d February, and Shendy about the 8th March.

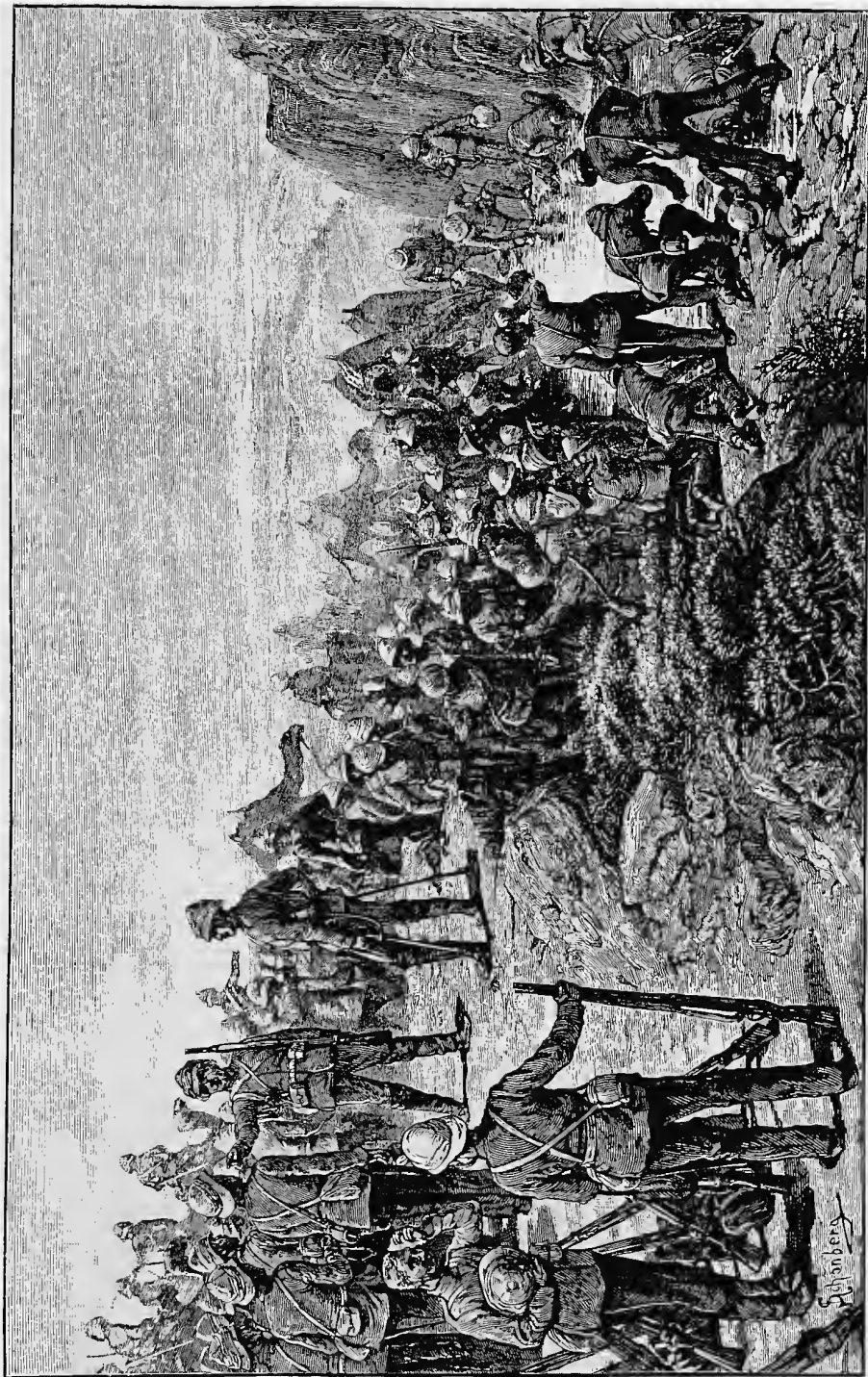
Lord Wolseley's force will commence to reach Metammeh the 16th January, and should be concentrated there with sixty days' supplies by the 2d March. If we hire many camels this date may be anticipated."

This then gives us, as it were, a view of the plans laid down by the general for the accomplishment of the objects of the campaign.

These instructions were handed to Colonel Sir Charles Wilson just before he started with Sir Herbert Stewart's column on the afternoon of the 8th of January, 1885. With him were Major Dickson, who was to be left at Khartûm with Gordon, and Verner of the rifle brigade, who was to sketch the road and to be left as intelligence officer at Metammeh. General Stewart had no apprehensions of falling short of forage on the road to Gakdul. After the first twenty miles from Korti there is at intervals a good supply of *savas* grass, which is good camel's food, and a fair quantity of small wood, chiefly acacia and mimosa. General

Stewart had had no difficulty in keeping the camels supplied on his previous journey. He had lost only twenty, or one per cent of the entire number, on the journey to Gakdul and back, and the men were in good condition. He thought little of the difficulties of the route. The country, both in its conformation and the character of the water supply, strongly reminded him of Seccoconi's country in South Africa. There was, in fact, good water at each of the halting-places to Abu-Klea, as well as in some of the ravines of Jebel Jilig, from which torrents come down in the rainy season forming the alluvial plain a few miles south-west of the road. Crops of dhurra are grown on this plain every year, and the tracks to be seen in the district show that the Arabs keep large herds of cattle. The road is good, the country is level and open, and the ground, with the exception of a few patches of sand between Gakdul and Abu-Klea, is so firm as to enable both infantry and cavalry to march without difficulty, while the weather at that time of year was cool, the nights really cold, and even at mid-day the heat was mitigated by cool breezes.

The march and the night encampment was not, therefore, distinguished by much hardship; the men were full of fun, especially the sailors, who were delighted with their performances as camel-riders, and "steered" or gave orders for steering their strange craft in nautical terms, responding to the jocularities of their commander, Sir Charles Beresford, who bestrode a white donkey. Before reaching the wells at Hambok, however, some of the men suffered from want of water, the supply of which had leaked out of the water-skins, which even here it was necessary to carry in order to secure a sufficient provision for such an expedition. At Hambok the water had been temporarily almost exhausted by the advance troops and camels, and there were but a few pints there, so the march was continued to El-Howeyat, nine miles further on. There also they found that the wells had been drained by the column that preceded them, and some of the reserve water had to be served out for breakfast, while sentries were placed over the wells till they gradually filled again, when the men were marched up by companies to quench their thirst. The



THE ADVANCE OF THE DESERT COLUMN UNDER MAJOR-GENERAL HERBERT STEWART.

HALT AT THE WELLS. JANUARY, 1885.





march to Abu-Halfa, to the next wells, continued from the afternoon till long after dark over some rough country till the fires of a camp were seen at a distance—the camp of the 19th Hussars as it turned out, whose officer, Major Barrow, had left the column at Howeyiat and gone straight on. There was a good deal of suffering for want of water during the night march, especially on the part of the Sussex men, who had lost the contents of the faulty water-skins served out to them at Korti, and as the supply at Abu-Halfa was short when they reached that place men were set to work to open new holes in the gravelly ground. The water was fresh and sweet, but muddy, and after much trouble to induce the men to come up in regular order for a supply of a pint or more for drinking before they camped down, and a subsequent supply for cooking, three tin biscuit-boxes were sunk in the ground to act as rough strainers or filters and reservoirs, from which the men could bale out water.

We have in a previous page already noted some account of the arrival of the troops at the wells at Gakdul.

The route of the desert column to Gakdul lay at the foot of the long range of Jebel-el-Jilif, which is broken by many ravines, so that after rain-storms there are numerous water-courses which carry off the rain from the mountains. These streams at such times issue from wild gorges, and are said to drain some distant plains, the proof of which is to be found in the quantities of dry brushwood and small timber strewn about, and evidently the collected drift-wood of some such flood. After issuing from these gorges the streams run over a slope of boulders and rubbish which they have brought down with them, and there the water spreads in numerous irregular channels and reunites at the foot of the slope, afterwards following well-defined sandy channels, the banks of which are fringed with trees; after running thus for distances of from a mile to three miles, they again branch off in various directions into smaller channels and are lost in a verdant plain on the south, where it is said that during the rains water is to be found to a depth of three or four feet. In the sandy channels just mentioned, holes are dug, which are, in fact, "the wells," such as

those of Abu-Halfa. It has been stated that a survey party out on this district at Christmas-tide, 1871, induced a sheikh of the Hassaneeyih to conduct them up one of the narrow and precipitous mountain gorges. After passing several pools of water standing in basins worn out of the granite bed, the gorge at a distance of above two miles from the entrance widened out into a valley about half a mile broad, where there was a small lake, the edges of which were fringed with bulrushes and doum palms, while the character of the huts which formed a village, the nature of the vegetation, and the presence of birds and conies showed that the lake was permanent. They heard that several lakes of this description were to be found in the wild recesses of the mountains, but the Arabs were not inclined to say much on the subject.

At about ninety-five miles from Ambukol the Jebel-el-Jilif range changes in character; the precipitous face breaking up into spurs and intermediate plains, and on one of these spurs, about two miles north of the route, are the wells of Gakdul, the water of which is sweet, though the lower wells are mostly muddy and often contaminated by the flocks that are constantly taken there to drink. The upper pools are much cleaner. The granite rock ceases with Jebel Jilif, and the route traverses the upper Nubian sandstone, and, as we have noted, is easily traversed to Abu-Klea, where the "wells" are artificial pits, which require frequent clearing out, but contain a good and continuous supply of water.

Describing the "desert march" in the *Nineteenth Century*, Lieutenant Douglas Dawson of the Coldstreams, speaking of the route to Gakdul from Howeyat, says: "We were now on the edge of a vast plain stretching to our right as far as the eye could see, while on our left, at the distance of a mile or so, rose the line of black barren-looking mountains that we were to follow the whole way to Gakdul. Just before the halt a capture was made of a man and his family who were watching their flocks feeding quietly in the plain, proving how unexpected an advance by this route must be. The man, who turned out to be a well-known hill robber chief, from his knowledge of the desert was henceforth enlisted as a guide, and remained with us till our return about two months later; the

family, after staying with us some days at Gakdul, were allowed to go home." This, of course, refers to the occupation of Gakdul by the first column, which awaited the return of Sir H. Stewart with the main force. The wells of Gakdul are at the head of a large circular plain or amphitheatre, surrounded by steep black rocks 300 feet high, which are in turn commanded by the ranges beyond: a difficult place to defend against an enemy, who might come suddenly down from the distant ridges on all sides at once.

The garrison of Gakdul, consisting of the guards and a detachment of 400 engineers, all under the command of Colonel Boscawen, had their work to do, as we have seen. For defensive purposes three forts were built on the high ground: Fort Stewart on the rocky hill commanding the gorge leading into the basin of Gakdul; Fort Boscawen, just over the wells, commanding the whole ground round the water and the steep gully by which the water pours into the wells or reservoirs in the rainy season; and a third smaller look-out post on a rocky spur flanking the two larger works. Mimosa thorn and scrub were cut down and thrown so as to block up the gullies leading into the basin, and down which a force might have approached without being seen. The fire from the three forts would sweep the whole amphitheatre, but at a later date Sir Evelyn Wood, when he was in command at Gakdul, substituted a chain of small "pepper-boxes" for the two big forts, and so crowned every ridge within range and ensured our occupation of the high ground. We have noted other improvements carried out, especially in the arrangements for watering the camels and horses by means of pumps, hose, and troughs; so that 3000 camels a day could be watered without much difficulty; and on the arrival of Sir Herbert Stewart's column on the 12th this work was so effectually done that though the poor beasts had had only eight pounds of grain apiece since leaving Korti, the force was ready to push forward on the following day, leaving behind as garrison at Gakdul Wells 400 of the Sussex under Colonel Vandeleur.

Colonel Stanley Clarke had left early in the morning with the return convoy to Korti, and Major Kitchener went with him—an

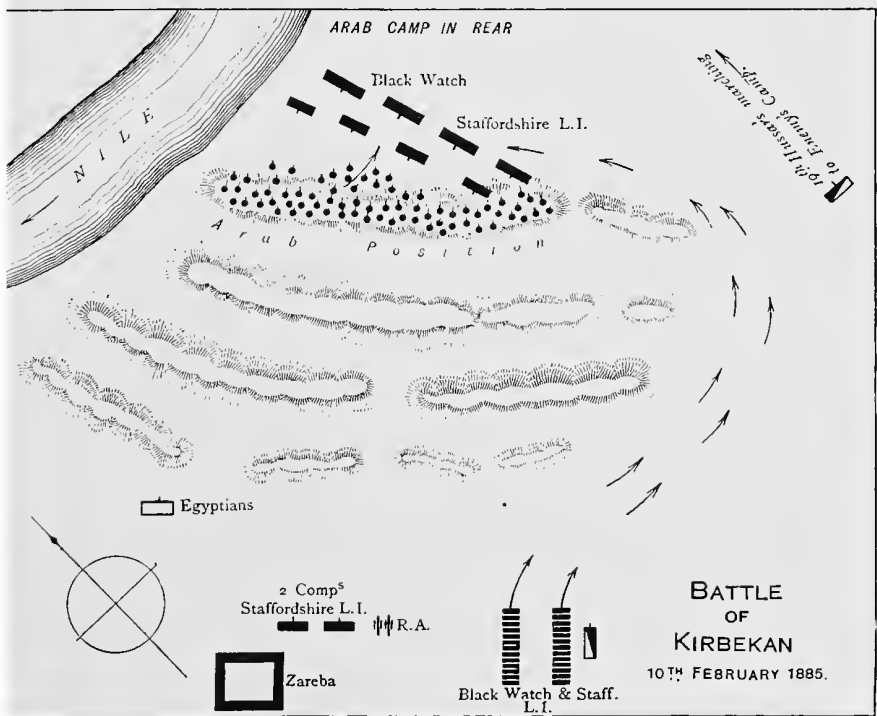
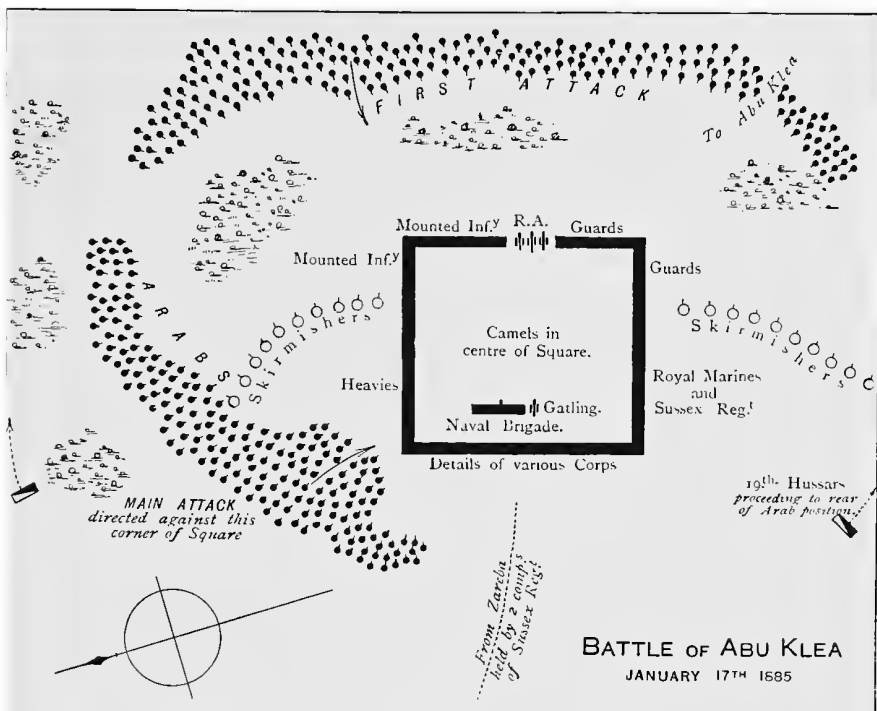
arrangement which the latter was by no means pleased with. The guards went on with the column, which paraded outside Gakdul and started at 2 p.m., and consisted of 3 troops 19th Hussars, 1st division of naval brigade, with one Gardner gun, half battery (3-7 pounder screw guns) royal artillery heavy camel regiment, Guards camel regiment, mounted infantry camel regiment, 100 Sussex Regiment, and transport and medical service; in all about 1500 men and 2300 camels. A mere handful of men to be exposed to the fierce onslaught of probably 10,000 or 12,000 savage opponents, who, as it afterwards was discovered, had been assembled at Abu-Klea, where they had taken possession of the wells. So far from the approach of Sir Herbert Stewart's force being unknown or unsuspected by those whose knowledge of it was least desirable, the column had scarcely started from Gakdul when a Remington rifle was found on the rocks, near where the men had "formed up," and as they got out to the desert recent horse tracks were seen a little off the road to Metammeh, so that there was no doubt of the advance being known. In about ten miles' march, which occupied rather more than three hours, fifteen camels succumbed, and it was then time to halt and bivouac for the night, for they had to start at daylight next morning—the reveillé sounding at 3.30 and the start just at dawn, about 5.15. The march was over a tract of loose sand, and after above four hours' march the advance halted for the stragglers at the Jebel-el-Nus, an isolated hill of sandstone which made an admirable landmark. Many of the camels were falling from want of food and from overwork. Recent tracks of horses were seen, showing that some of the enemy's scouts had been on the look-out, and in the distance three or four of their camel men had been observed; but no news was brought in to our main column by the hussars, who were scouting in advance, and none of the messengers sent out had returned. The column, having plodded on till five o'clock in the evening, camped for the night at Jebel Sergain, where the camels were tied down and preparations made for a probable attack, so that the wretched beasts could not move to get a meal of the savas grass which grew plentifully in the neighbourhood,

and the supply of dhurra that could be carried for them was very small.

On the morning of the 16th the column again started before daylight, so that part of the force got away on a wrong track, and it was half an hour before they reached their places again, and the camels were rolling and tumbling about on some very rough ground. In an hour, however, day broke, and the column was on a vast level plain, where tracks of horses and spots where recent encampments had been, could be seen here and there. In front were the hills of Abu-Klea in the distance, and Major Barrow with Colonels Dickson and Stuart Wortley were ordered to push on with the hussars and occupy the wells. Between ten and eleven, having reached the foot of the hills, the column halted for a rest and some breakfast. The spot was at the end of the long plain with steep black mountains in front. There was little time either to rest or to eat, for at eleven o'clock Major Barrow came in to report that he had found the enemy in force between the main column and the wells. With three or four hussars he had pursued some of the Arab scouts into the Abu-Klea valley, where he had seized one man, when a number of spearmen sprang from the long grass, and he was obliged to drop his prisoner and ride for his life. The route from the halting-place of the column to the wells was through a pass of the mountain, and after ascending this and on coming to a ridge, detached bodies of the enemy could be seen on the hilltops in front. There was great excitement among our troops at the prospect of a fight, and Sir Herbert Stewart and Sir Charles Wilson went out to see what was the position of the enemy; the former returning to select a place at which to halt the convoy, while the latter went on to reconnoitre and to join the advance picket of hussars down the valley, whence could be seen a long line of banners fluttering in the breeze and stretching right across the road. There was also a large tent, and the beating of tom-toms, and the puffs of white smoke to be descried in the distance showed that the attack had begun, inasmuch as the rifles of the enemy were being fired at the advanced party of hussars—though it was at too great a distance

for the bullets to reach them. Sir Charles Wilson returned to report that there was a large force in front, part of which must belong to the Mahdi's army, and that a serious encounter might be looked for. About 1500 or 2000 yards to the right of the position occupied by our main force a swarm of savages began to wave their spears and execute a wild dance, after which they commenced firing.

Sir Herbert Stewart had halted the column on a stony plateau, where he gave orders that a seriba should be formed, and one was quickly built of stone and the thorny branches of the mimosa. Pickets were sent out to occupy two hills on the left, where the mounted infantry built a small fort. The hour of nightfall was approaching. It would be dark in less than a couple of hours, and the general determined not to advance till next morning. The enemy's riflemen were creeping up on the right of the advanced post and soon got within range, their bullets whistling about the spot occupied by the picket and becoming so frequent that the men were withdrawn, and still the enemy crept round the right till the cavalry vedettes also had to be withdrawn. It was nearly sunset when our men got into the seriba, and then the enemy's sharpshooters were firing continuously from the hill already mentioned. This lasted all night as the men lay in position waiting for an attack which was not made, though sometimes the beating of tom-toms sounded quite close, and in the dense darkness, if anyone (against orders) struck a match to light a pipe, or if, in the hospital where there were already some wounded, a light was shown for an instant, the gleam was sure to be followed by a bullet from the enemy. Our men waited anxiously for the morning. Sir Charles Wilson says: "I do not know a more curiously deceptive sound than that of tom-toms: it is almost impossible to localize it, especially when any wind is blowing. I slept near Stewart and his staff close behind the guards, who were in the front line of the seriba and in one of the lines of fire; fortunately there was a little dip in the ground which sheltered us, the bullets striking the opposite slope. The enemy must have kept a sharp look-out, for as one of the surgeons was performing an operation







in the hospital the man holding the lantern incautiously turned it towards the hill occupied by the riflemen; a volley of bullets was the immediate answer, succeeded by a steady fire, which luckily did little harm.<sup>1</sup>

The nights were exceedingly cold, and from this the men suffered considerably while they waited for the dawn expecting an attack. As the planet Venus rose in the sky they stood to their arms, for it had been said that this was the usual signal for the assault of the enemy; but there seemed to be some delay or indecision, since though the fire from the hill became hotter and some of the guards and mounted infantry were sent out to suppress it, and though several of the enemy ran down the hill and crept up towards the seriba, and those in the valley had approached nearer, no large masses of them appeared, and it seemed that they did not intend to attack at once, but to keep up a harassing fire. Those of them who occupied the hill were protected by low stone walls. The seriba may be described as an abattis of earth and brushwood, or thorny acacia and sunt trees (*Acacia arabica*) round the baggage, and about 150 yards of protecting stone breastwork some hundred yards further to the front. Major Dickson was shot through the leg, and a few other officers and men were also hit. The fire of the Arabs was becoming serious, and some of their horsemen crept round to the right of the position, but were dispersed by a few rounds of shell. Sir Herbert Stewart determined to march out and give battle, leaving a force to hold the seriba; and after having breakfast under a brisk fire from the enemy the men were delighted to receive orders to form square and prepare to advance.

The square was formed by the guards and mounted infantry in front; the rear face by four companies of the heavy camel regiment, with its fifth company round the angle and on the left face of the square; the detachment of the Sussex Regiment on the right face towards the rear; the naval brigade and the Gardner-gun were between the third and fourth companies of the heavies, whose adjutant, Lord St. Vincent, was badly wounded before the

<sup>1</sup> From Korti to Khartûm.

attack. In fact, the moment our men appeared on the high ground to form up, the fire of the enemy was continuous, and many of our men were hit before the advance could be made. Some of the Sussex and the baggage guards were to remain in charge of the seriba, and the 19th Hussars were to operate on the left of the square, the front and flanks of which were covered by our skirmishers who engaged those of the enemy. The square being formed our men marched down the valley towards the row of flags which stretched across it, while the hussars moved off to the left to keep the sharpshooters on the hills in check. Several times the square halted and returned the fire with Martinis and the screw-guns, with the result that numbers of men were seen streaming off from the enemy's right in the valley.

Sir Charles Wilson gives a graphic description of the advance and the sudden appearance of the enemy. "When the skirmishers got within about 200 yards of the flags the square was halted for the rear to close up, and at this moment the enemy rose from the ravine in which they were hidden in the most perfect order. It was a beautiful and striking sight, such a one as Fitz James must have seen when Roderick Dhu's men rose out of the heather; nothing could be more applicable than Scott's description. It was as if there were portions of three phalanxes with rows of men behind.<sup>1</sup> At the head of each rode an emir or sheikh with a banner accompanied by personal attendants, and then came the fighting men. They advanced at a quick even pace, as if on parade, and our skirmishers had only just time to get into the square before they were upon us; one poor fellow who lagged behind was caught and speared at once. When the enemy commenced their attack I remember experiencing a feeling of pity mixed with admiration for them as I thought they would all be shot down in a few minutes. I could not have believed beforehand that men in close formation would have been able to advance for 200 to 400 yards over bare ground in the face of Martini-Henrys. As they advanced the feeling was changed to

<sup>1</sup> The figure made by the disposition of the Arabs may be said to have resembled a trident, the three points of the forks being the front, with an emir or chief at each point.—T. A.

wonder that the tremendous fire we were keeping up had so little effect. When they got within eighty yards the fire of the guards and mounted infantry began to take good effect, and a huge pile of dead rose in front of them. Then, to my astonishment, the enemy took ground to their right, as if on parade, so as to envelope the rear of the square. I remember thinking, "By Jove, they will be into the square!" and almost the next moment I saw a fine old sheikh on horseback plant his banner in the centre of the square behind the camels. He was at once shot down, falling on his banner. He turned out to be Musa, emir of the Duguaim Arabs from Kordofan. I had noticed him in the advance with his banner in one hand and a book of prayers in the other, and never saw anything finer. The old man never swerved to the right or left, and never ceased chanting his prayers until he had planted his banner in our square. If any man deserved a place in the Moslem paradise, he did. When I saw the old sheikh in the square and heard the wild uproar behind the camels I drew my revolver; for directly the sheikh fell the Arabs began running in under the camels to the front part of the square. Some of the rear rank now faced about and began firing. By this fire Herbert Stewart's horse was shot, and as he fell three Arabs ran at him. I was close to his horse's tail, and disposed of the one nearest to me, about three paces off, and the others were, I think, killed by the mounted-infantry officers close by. Almost immediately afterwards the enemy retired, and loud and long cheering broke out from the square. . . . They retired slowly, and for a short time hesitated in the valley before they made their final bolt. During this period of excitement groups of three to five Arabs, who had feigned death, would start up from the slain and rush wildly at the square. They were met by a heavy fire, but so badly directed that several of them got right up to the bayonets. The men did not quiet down until the square was re-formed on the gravel slope, about fifty yards in advance of the spot where it had stood to meet the attack. Many of the officers and men now went out to bring in water-skins and ammunition-boxes from the camels which had been killed. Curious how one's feelings get blunted



so have ceased firing, may have been unavoidable; and the sailors were hurled back with the inrush, their officers fighting and some of them falling round the now useless gun; but that the men who had to stand the fierce and desperate charge, the cavalry men as well as the infantry, should have had to throw down their ineffectual rifles and take to the bayonets, perhaps in many instances to find that, like the bayonets of the troops at Suakim, they bent like blades of tin, was a horrible experience, for which, even in that dread moment, many a curse not loud but deep may have been forgiven. The Gardner had jammed at the tenth round, and the Arabs ran in at the opening, as they did at Tamai, the corner of the square being crushed in. The naval officers were knocked over by the rush, including Sir C. Beresford, who, however, was up again in a moment.

Amidst it all the demeanour of the Guards' officers was noticed. Without noise or fuss they gave orders as though they were on parade, and spoke to their men quite quietly as though nothing unusual was going on. It was said that not a single Arab passed through the ranks of the Life Guards and the Blues.

Burnaby, seeing that the heavies must be opened out and that the Gardner must have room to play, rode forward, and met his death fighting like a knight of old, and with his vast strength and terrible sword cleaving his way until his horse was brought down and the Arab's sword was in his neck.

There was for some time a good deal of contention on the subject of the manner in which the Arabs made their way into the square, and therefore the subsequent explanation made by Lieut.-col. the Hon. R. Talbot in *The Nineteenth Century* was regarded as important, since that officer was in a better position than most of his comrades to observe and to record the part taken in the battle by the heavy camel regiments of which he was in command.

The total strength of the regiment was 390. *Right wing:* 1st company—1st Life Guards, 2nd Life Guards; 2nd company—Royal Horse Guards, Queen's Bays. *Left wing:* 3d company—4th Dragoon Guards, 5th Dragoon Guards; 4th company—Royal Dragoons, Scots Greys; 5th company—5th Lancers, 16th Lancers.

by the sight of blood and horrors. There was one strange incident. An unwounded Arab armed with a spear jumped up and charged an officer. The officer grasped the spear with the left hand, and with his right ran his sword through the Arab's body; and there for a few seconds they stood, the officer being unable to withdraw his sword until a man ran up and shot the Arab. It was a living embodiment of one of the old gladiatorial fiascoes at Pompeii. It did not, strange to say, seem horrible; rather, after what had passed, an everyday occurrence. I used to wonder before how the Romans could look on at the gladiatorial fights; I do so no longer."

But there were sights which could not be witnessed with so much equanimity, especially at the place where the Arabs had entered the square. Officers lay there accidentally shot dead, as it was feared, by their own men when the rear rank turned round to fire. This, it was surmised, caused the death of Carmichael and Gough of the Royals; but much that was said at the time and afterwards was conjecture, as was seen when inquiries were made how the corner of the square was broken, or whether it was actually broken at all. Some thought that it was a mistake to place cavalry men from various regiments—detachments hurriedly brought together—to fight like infantry in a square and with an arm they were not accustomed to—a long rifle and bayonet instead of a short handy carbine—and to expect the cavalry man to stand firm when his usual practice is never to be still for a moment when in action.

But there was one bitter and outrageous explanation of the almost desperate position of our men during that brief and bloody contest; when, in the few minutes that it lasted, the Arab spears slew so many, and might have destroyed the whole force but for the hard and determined courage of the British soldier, who will fight while he has a weapon or can clench a fist. Numbers of the rifles—the Martini-Henrys—were useless. The cartridges jammed, being, as Sir Charles Wilson says, made on economical principles, so that they would not stand knocking about. That the Gardner-gun should have got jammed or choked up with sand and grit, and



BATTLE OF ABU KLEA.

BRITISH SQUARE CHARGED BY SOUDANESE. JANUARY, 1885.





so have ceased firing, may have been unavoidable; and the sailors were hurled back with the inrush, their officers fighting and some of them falling round the now useless gun; but that the men who had to stand the fierce and desperate charge, the cavalry men as well as the infantry, should have had to throw down their ineffectual rifles and take to the bayonets, perhaps in many instances to find that, like the bayonets of the troops at Suakim, they bent like blades of tin, was a horrible experience, for which, even in that dread moment, many a curse not loud but deep may have been forgiven. The Gardner had jammed at the tenth round, and the Arabs ran in at the opening, as they did at Tamai, the corner of the square being crushed in. The naval officers were knocked over by the rush, including Sir C. Beresford, who, however, was up again in a moment.

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By the time the attack took place the company of the Royals and Scots Greys (No 4) had been partly moved from the rear to the left face to fill up the gap caused by the gradual lengthening out of the sides of the square, due to the impossibility of keeping up the strings of camels carrying litters for the wounded, ammunition, and water. By this movement the rear of the square was considerably weakened.

The route taken was parallel to, and a few hundred yards from the wady, or shallow ravine, that ran on the left to the wells of Abu-Klea, in which grew stunted trees, and thick high grass concealing deep water-courses, giving admirable cover for the enemy, and the course of the march was up and down, and across steep hillocks of hard sand which sloped towards the wady, and it was commanded by hills to the right and rear occupied by Arab riflemen. It was trying ground for camels, hardly a yard of it being level, and also for the Gardner-gun, which was hauled by the blue-jackets.

It will be remembered that the enemy's sharpshooters were firing upon the flanks and rear of the square directly it had started to march from the seriba, and that many men and some officers were killed or wounded; among the latter, Lord St. Vincent and Major Dickson. Skirmishers from the Heavy Camel Regiment were sent out to the rear and the rear flanks to silence the fire of the enemy, and at the same time Lord Charles Beresford and other officers were expressing their concern at the difficulty in keeping the rear closed up because of the manner in which the camels dragged out. Thus, the form and the strength of square were impaired, and the camel-drivers sidling and edging away from the fire of the enemy's riflemen on the right rear pressed out the left corner of the square, though the Gardner-gun was kept up by the grand exertions of the sailors in spite of the interference of the camels. After a very slow march of about two miles the enemy's flags were seen to be in motion, and a large force of Arabs at about 500 to 700 yards' distance sprang up and advanced as if to attack the left leading corner of the square. The square was at once halted and moved to the right on to a slight elevation, a simple movement for men but difficult for camels, many of which

remained outside the square when it was halted—that which carried the wounded Lord St. Vincent among the rest. There was a gap in the left face of the square through which the Gardner-gun was taken into action until it jammed. The wady on the left then became alive with Arabs, a solid column of whom were to be seen emerging; but our skirmishers were still out and were fully occupied exchanging shots with the sharpshooters, so that they did not readily enough perceive the attack on the main body. Therefore the fire of the rear of the square had to be reserved, and the officers had to prevent the men from taking up the fire of the guards and mounted infantry till the skirmishers had returned into the square. Major Byng was the last but one to get back; the last man of all was overtaken and speared. Almost with the return of the skirmishers came on the great body of Arabs, led by their chiefs on horseback, quite unshaken by the fire from the rear portion of the square; for until that moment the Heavy Camel Regiment had withheld their fire, which was then delivered at the advancing column. Taking advantage of the opening in the square, the Arabs hurled themselves with terrific rapidity and fury upon it. The company of the 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards had a few moments before been wheeled outwards by Colonel Burnaby, with the intention, as Lieutenant-colonel Talbot understood, of bringing their fire to bear; “but no sooner did he see that, not only on the flanks but on the rear, the attack was being developed, than he rode in front of the company and shouted to the men to wheel back. The order was obeyed, the men stepping steadily backwards. Before they had got back into their original place the Arabs were in through the interval thus created, and through the gap already existing at the left rear corner of the square. Burnaby, whose horse had fallen, was one of the first to be attacked, and as he lay on the ground he received a mortal wound in the neck from a sword cut.”

The Royals, Greys, 5th Lancers, upon whose rear the camels pressed, hampering their free movement, were now attacked in rear by those of the enemy who had succeeded in passing the 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards, coming through and under the camels,

at the time that they were engaged with the enemy in front. "A severe hand-to-hand fight ensued, in which the strength and determination of our men told, and not an Arab escaped alive. The affair was a matter of moments, and from first to last not more than five minutes elapsed. The fire of the mounted infantry principally and of the Guards Camel Regiment (who faced their rear rank about), of the detachment of the Sussex and of the right wing of the Heavy Camel Regiment, prevented the Arabs from reinforcing their attacking column; but the brunt of the fight, the hand-to-hand encounter, was borne by the left wing of the last-named regiment. No men could have fought better, and although two detachments lost their officers, their places were at once assumed by the non-commissioned officers. It was an Inkerman on a small scale—a soldiers' battle; strength, determination, steadiness, and unflinching courage alone could have stemmed the onslaught."

The force which formed the column under Sir Herbert Stewart was composed of the flower of the British army. The commander repeatedly said that no more splendid body of men could be found—picked shots—men of stamina and strength; and Lieut.-colonel Talbot declares that in the events that happened no credit belonged to one corps more than another. The brunt of the attack fell upon the left wing of the Heavy Camel Regiment and the Naval Brigade, and they acquitted themselves to the satisfaction of their general, but not a bit better did they acquit themselves than others of the column would have done. They all did their work in the several places in which they found themselves. He also says, "No cavalry soldier ever wishes to be separated from his horse except when honoured by being selected for some exceptional service like the advance across the Bayûda desert. But having been called upon, their general, at all events, was of opinion that no troops could have done better under the circumstances than those upon whom the shock of the fight fell. Certain it is that no one regiment, either cavalry or infantry, could have supplied an equal number of highly trained, active, strong, efficient men, selected from their regiments for general efficiency and good shooting."

Sir Herbert Stewart issued the following written order:—

*Brigade Orders by Brigadier-general Sir H. Stewart, K.C.B.*

“ Abu-Klea, January 13, 1885.

The brigadier expresses the most sincere thanks to the officers and men under his command for the exertions they made during the march from Korti; these were crowned yesterday by a triumphant victory which proved once again—so often proved before—that the courage of British soldiers when united with discipline is more than a match for any number of savages. The brigadier knows well what work the men are doing, and he regrets sincerely the exceptional labours he is obliged to ask from them in a trying climate under privations of food and water; but he is confident that they are animated by the same spirit that supports him, and feels that, if the trials are exceptional, the honour of being called on to undertake them is exceptional also. The brigadier-general deplotes deeply the loss of so many brave comrades, and laments they were not spared to share the high reputation for fearlessness and discipline which was earned by them equally with the living. The brigadier asks the men for another display of courage and self-denial. We have to reach the Nile, a distance of twenty-five miles, and when that is done a large part of our work will be ended, and a feat will have been achieved at the end of which every man can say that he has indeed striven to do his duty.”

This was the last order issued by a commander of whom Lieut.-colonel Talbot, sharing the opinion of other officers who admired and loved the chief of the Bayûda column, says he “ was one of the ablest, most intrepid of generals. He inspired all under him with confidence and devotion. Had he lived, a great career was before him. His loss was irreparable at the moment it occurred, and what it may be to this country in the future cannot be estimated.”

Lieutenant Dawson gives a stirring and vivid picture of this battle, fought in a few minutes, and followed by a march forward towards the place, to reach which quickly, every effort had to be used. He says:—

“As we advanced we covered our front and flanks with skirmishers, who engaged those of the enemy. The latter worked wonderfully, the ground lending itself to their game. This drew the fire to some extent off the square, which, however, advanced *at slow march* steadily, and with only a halt every now and then to load up the wounded on the camels. We kept always on open rocky ground; to the left was the ‘wady’ or gully, a deep pass of grass and bush-grown sand intersected with innumerable water-channels down which in rain-storms the water evidently tears. These gullies would have rendered our advance with camels, and guns dragged now by hand, nearly impossible; and we also thus avoided ground where the enemy could hide and collect close to us unseen. Meanwhile, the hills on each side were swarming with them moving parallel—sharpshooters and spearmen. When about 1500 yards from the line of flags, the guns sent four or five shells right among them, and we saw hundreds of them spring up and bolt. On nearing the flags, so little could be seen of the enemy there that the skirmishers sent word to ask if they might go down and take them, and all seemed to think that most of the Arabs were gone. One of our officers, who had been at Teb and Tamai, said to me, ‘There is no one there; it is merely a burial-ground;’ and Sir Herbert Stewart laughingly said to Burnaby, who was in immediate command of the square, ‘Move a little more to the left; I want that green flag.’

Just at this moment, when about 450 yards from the flags, as if they had risen from the earth, up rose a line of spearmen all across the wady, and at the same moment the whole wady behind appeared black with them. I should say about 5000 in number, they came on, headed by men on horses, next to whom came the flags, and behind them an overwhelming mass of spears seemed to be going to envelop the whole square. The charge was at the left front corner of the square (they know the corner is the weakest, and always charge there), but having yelled to the skirmishers to run in, the mounted infantry gave them such a fire as to sheer off the main attack towards the left rear corner, where was the Heavy Camel Regiment. Here I afterwards heard

two gaps had been created—first, by the jamming of the Gardner-gun which was in the angle, and which, I suppose choked by sand, went wrong after firing two or three rounds; second, the camels laden with the wounded having lagged behind could not be got inside the rear face. This latter may be partly accounted for by the fact that, just as the enemy appeared, Burnaby ordered the square, which was halted, to advance a few yards so as to occupy ground giving complete command on all sides. The well-known reluctance of the tired camel to rise in a hurry will account for the fact that at the charge many were outside the square and consequently deserted by their drivers, who bolted inside; indeed, had it not been for the promptness and gallantry of an officer who saw this, all the wounded would have been speared outside. At any rate, the advancing mass came on nearer and nearer undeterred by the tremendous fire they were exposed to. That the firing at this moment did not stop the front ranks of the enemy is shown by the fact that all the flags coming on, high up in the air, were being riddled with bullets, and seeing this I found myself near the left face trying with others to induce the men to aim lower. By this time they were against us hand-to-hand. I saw Burnaby on his horse outside the square doing great execution with his sword, then he disappeared, then by sheer weight we were driven back step by step—past Beresford's now useless gun, where nearly every man belonging to it was speared as he stood and Beresford himself knocked down (I saw him on his legs again in an instant)—past where Stewart and Wardrop were trying to stem the rush, and Stewart's horse by sheer weight was knocked off his legs and speared; till the gradual retirement of the left face brought it close to the rear of the front face. Thus the left face of the square had made a wheel backwards. Frantic shouts to the guards to stand firm were not really required. We shouted ourselves hoarse, but it was not necessary. It looked at this moment as if the last two remaining sides of the square must be swallowed up by the hordes surrounding us. So much so that seeing my brother a few paces off I rushed to him, shook his hand hard, and returned to my place. But

the front and right sides never moved, and though from some descriptions of this fight it would appear as if the square travelled some distance during the *mêlée*, I can confidently assert that the front face was in exactly the same position when all was over as when first halted to receive the charge. Setting their feet apart for better purchase, our men refused to budge one inch; we put our rear rank right about; and they shot down or bayoneted every Arab that came near them, and then, to my surprise, I saw the forest of flag-poles (bare by now) and spears halt, waver, and slowly move back. Then began the most indiscriminate firing of the whole time, and I fear at this time many of our poor fellows lost their lives. Among my own men I was surrounded by representatives from nearly every regiment in the force, who all began firing *into* the square at the retreating enemy. I should think twenty or thirty rifles went off just in my ear, fired over my head, past my head, anywhere. . . .

I shall never forget the slow sullen way in which the Arabs retired, every now and then turning round to look and stop as if anxious to come on again, and often ten or twelve would jump up from the ground and rush on till the rattle of rifles stopped them for ever. At last three or four would rush on the square, and finally one man alone. When 500 yards off we got the guns on them with grape, and this hastened the retreat and left us in possession of the ground."

It should not be forgotten that, though the march across the Bayûda was not strictly speaking a "desert" march, the necessity for going slowly to spare the camels and yet of moving continuously, not only greatly fatigued the men, but made it necessary to carry food and water, of which only a small quantity could be served in rations. The allowance of water was two pints a man per day, and it may therefore be understood with what avidity the soldiers, no less than the camels and horses, sought to slake their thirst at the wells, where the water was mostly of the consistency of pease-soup. Nor had the experiences of those soldiers who had marched from Wady Halfa and followed the expedition from Korti been less arduous. An



officer, writing home after reaching Korti (on the 12th of January) said:—

“I will just give you a rough outline of our journey across more than three hundred miles of desert. We left Wady Halfa at daybreak on the 11th December about one hundred strong, and about one hundred and fifty camels, and marched fifteen miles that day to Gemai, which is just at the foot of the Great Cataract (fourteen miles long). We marched by the river that day, and so had a grand view of the cataract. You must not think that the water falls in one great mass, because it does not. The river at this spot is about three-quarters of a mile wide, and for fourteen miles it is studded with innumerable rocks, and the force of the current coming down on them causes the water to rush over them in volumes, forming awful whirlpools, the noise of which we could hear a long time before we saw them. Well, we reached Gemai about four that afternoon, and camped for the night, and slept the sleep of the just (and tired). The next day we continued our march along the river to Sarras, nineteen miles; the next day to Semneh, and there we entered the desert. Our first day's march after leaving Semneh was very rough, over mountains of black rock, just as if huge pieces of stone had been piled up promiscuously; and over these we had to pick our path, one after the other, and leading our camels, as it was impossible to ride them over such a rough road. However, we got over it all right, after losing one camel, which fell down and could not get up again. We continued our journey after that for some days, and very warm we found it, I assure you. We were always up an hour before daybreak, and away as soon as the sun showed; and there we would continue on in the saddle from six A.M. until five at night, with the sun pouring down on us straight overhead, and beneath us loose sand as far as the eye could reach. The sun seems to rise out of the sand, and go down into the sand again. So we travelled on for days and weeks, only touching the river now and then—about every three days—to get fresh water and to water our camels; and what joy there was when the river came in view, after being parched with thirst. I have often felt as if I

would have given all I possessed for a drink of cold water. I never felt the want of water before, but it is fearful. I would much sooner go without food than water. We used to carry our water-bottles full (about a pint and a half); but what was that in the scorching desert? The sun soon burnt our faces and hands nearly black, and my lips were all cracked; and sometimes when I opened my mouth to eat a biscuit, being so hard, they would bleed. My eyes were quite red; and altogether, when we reached Korti we were a warm-looking lot—and so, in fact, are all the troop up here. So we have to laugh, and congratulate one another on our good looks, and wonder what the people at home would say if they could but see us, all burnt up, while they are frozen out.

I must tell you how I enjoyed my Christmas dinner—something grand, you can guess—about the queerest Christmas dinner I ever dreamt of having. We were about twelve miles from Dongola, when we halted on Christmas-eve, and on Christmas morning at daybreak we started once more, with our dinner in our haversacks. It consisted of tinned beef, biscuits, and raw onions, washed down with a drink of Nile water, and consumed in the saddle about mid-day. We got to Dongola about three, and then after our ‘ships of the desert’ were fed and picketed all correct we went for a bathe, having been without a wash for three days. We jumped into the Nile, and chanced the crocodiles, and had a good cooler; after which we washed our only shirts and waited for them to dry. After that we had a bit more ‘bully’ (beef) and a pipe, and we all felt as well as if we had dined off the best, and went to bed happy, after sitting round our camp fire for an hour, having a few songs and a war-dance by the Arabs. I must tell you that although it is so very hot during the day it is equally cold at night, and a fire is very essential. Next day we continued our march to Handak or Shabadool, from thence to Debbah, and from Debbah to Ambukol, and then on to Korti, and are now ten days’ march from Khartûm. There is an enterprising Greek who managed to get here somehow or other, and has opened a small store. I will just tell you a few things that he sells. Milk cheap; jam, 4s. a tin; candles, 5s. a pound; and matches, 6d. a box. He also makes pancakes with

doura flour (black flour) and water, sprinkled with a little sugar; these he sells at 6*d.* each, and has purchasers. We get fresh meat here and black bread, but it is not bad. We had worse at some places along the road, and the last two days they have given us bacon and cheese; and to-day the wonderful Nile comforts have come to light, for they gave us an issue of pickles; so we cannot grumble about our rations now, but be thankful we get what we do. We get no liquor whatever, have seen no beer for months, and had only two or three tots of rum since I have been up the Nile; so we are a teetotal army. Before you get this I shall probably be in Khartûm—that is, if I manage to get through the bit of fighting that we expect shortly. We captured a convoy of flour and dates going to the Mahdi the other day; they were brought into camp with the prisoners. There were about five hundred sacks of doura (corn for camels), and the same quantity of dates, which went into our army stores. We did not lose a single man.”

The condition of the men after the short but tremendous struggle at Abu-Klea was not such as to suggest an immediate advance even as far as the wells themselves; but Sir Herbert Stewart decided not only to push on for that distance, but to continue the march to Metammeh next day, rather than wait for reinforcements, for delay was dangerous; the Mahdi seemed to be preparing to crush the British column, and as soon as the occupation of Gakdul was known his troops were set in motion. Gakdul was occupied by Sir Herbert Stewart at 6.45 A.M. on the 2d January. On the 4th Muhammed el Keir, the Emir of Berber, ordered his men to go to the assistance of the Emir of Metammeh. Omdurma was taken between the 6th and 13th, and the battle of Abu-Klea was fought on the 17th. The enemy had thus thirteen days to concentrate at Abu-Klea; and Metammeh, the place to which Sir Herbert Stewart was hastening the British column, was 176 miles from Korti and only about 90 miles from Berber and 98 from Khartûm.

The battle at Abu-Klea was no sooner over and the retreating

Arabs were scarcely out of sight when Barrow, who, with his hussars, had kept in check a large body of the enemy, rode up. His horses were too tired and too done up with the march and through want of water to be able to pursue the enemy or to act efficiently as cavalry; but he was sent at once to occupy the wells.

The situation was critical and difficult, but there was no time for hesitation, nor was Sir Herbert Stewart the man to hesitate in making a bold decision. The Mahdi's forces at Metammeh were preparing for an attack, and had, it was understood, formed an intrenched camp there. Though the attempt to overwhelm the British force at Abu-Klea had failed, the experience of El Teb and Tamanieb went to show that the battle would not be regarded as final, and that the enemy would renew the conflict and fight even more desperately. The serious question was, whether with such a handful of troops a general could determine to march to Metammeh, and storm an intrenched position defended by perhaps ten thousand of the Mahdi's followers, many of them armed with rifles and possessing at least three guns. Of the two thousand men who left Korti only about fifteen hundred fought at Abu-Klea, the others having been left either in hospital or to guard the wells at Hanbok, El Howeiyat, and Gakdul. Of the fifteen hundred, a hundred and fifty were *hors de combat*, and when a guard was told off to hold the hospital and wells at Abu-Klea and the wells at Shebacat, the effective force which would have to meet the enemy at Metammeh would not much exceed a thousand men. Would he fall back on Abu-Klea and wait for reinforcements, or push on in the direction which would lead him to strike the Nile above or below the enemy's position, and there wait for the arrival of General Earle's river column?

That the advance would be against great odds was obvious enough, and though we had been victorious at Abu-Klea we had suffered serious loss. Our success had been dearly purchased. The death of Lieutenant-colonel Fred Burnaby was not perhaps the chief calamity of that short and bloody struggle, but it was the most illustrative of the kind of price we might have to pay

for inflicting repeated defeats upon a savage horde by which our small expedition was vastly outnumbered. Burnaby himself was in a peculiar sense a representative officer, though he cannot be said to have given a personal example of military discipline and obedience to authority, since he was constantly engaged in some enterprise of exploration, adventure, or hard fighting to which he had not been officially appointed; he was, largely in consequence of this irregular habit of claiming a kind of roving commission, so well known in various parts of the world for dauntless and sometimes eccentric bravery and for his often demonstrative personality, that his name seemed to give a more significant emphasis to the list of the slain. Lieutenant-colonel Burnaby had, so to speak, held a prominent place in society, and had repeatedly attracted public attention since he was a schoolboy at Harrow, one of the biggest boys for his age, who ever learned and fought and played there. He was sent to Harrow from a grammar-school at Bedford, his father, the Rev. Gustavus Andrew Burnaby, being vicar of St. Peter's and Canon of Middleham, and residing at Sowerby Hall, Leicestershire, where young Burnaby was born. At Harrow Burnaby was distinguished, not only for his height and strength, but for his physical energy and athleticism. He did not finish his education at the famous school, however, but was sent under private tuition to Germany, where he devoted himself to the study of modern languages, so successfully that his acquirements were of great service in his subsequent wanderings. It was said at the time of his famous ride to Khiva and his expedition to Asia Minor that he had a writing as well as a speaking acquaintance with nine languages, including Arabic and Russian, with his knowledge of which he challenged anyone in England to compete. In 1858, at the age of sixteen, he returned to England and passed his examination for military service, and the next year was gazetted as cornet in the Horse Guards (Blue). Two years afterwards he was made lieutenant, got his company in 1876, was major in 1879, lieutenant-colonel in 1880, and obtained his regiment in 1881.

His personal appearance, whether he was on horseback on

parade or sauntering down the street, was sure to attract attention, for he was six feet four inches in height, and of a frame which gave evidence of such prodigious strength as we usually associate with the stories of Cœur de Lion, of Danish or Saxon warriors, or of "the Douglas." His energy and endurance were as remarkable as his enormous muscular power; and while he is said to have used for exercise a ponderous dumb-bell which an ordinary man could scarcely raise from the ground, his long and arduous journeys and the apparent indifference with which he encountered vicissitudes of climate that would have deterred or delayed other men, raised the admiration if not the wonder of those who read or heard of his travels, in which he was accompanied by his brave and faithful "orderly," Radford, a man even bigger and perhaps of greater muscular power than himself, but with less endurance under prolonged exertion and exposure, so that, though he rallied from the effects of a wild journey in Asia Minor, he succumbed to the privations which had to be endured when he accompanied his master to the scene of the Russo-Turkish war.

Personally Burnaby was the kind of man who is popularly regarded as the typical Englishman: of great strength, equable temper, simple unostentatious manners, and so little addicted to luxury that not only did he live with great plainness, though he of course consumed a considerable quantity of steak or joint, but he had an aversion to "an establishment," and would not put his house on the usual footing with regard to the number of servants. In fact, the restless spirit of adventure which took the lord of the manor of Sowerby so frequently from home for months at a time made an establishment unnecessary so far as he himself was concerned, and he cared little or nothing for what is known as fashionable society. One amusing story is told of his extraordinary strength at the time soon after he had joined the Blues and when the regiment was at Windsor. A horse-dealer, who owned a pair of remarkably small ponies, had taken them to the royal town by command of the queen, that her majesty might see them, and was induced first to exhibit them to the officers of the Blues. Captain Burnaby's rooms were on the first-floor, and it was agreed that

they should be brought there. After a little trouble in getting the little animals upstairs the door was opened and they trotted in to the great amusement of the party; but it was soon discovered that they had an insuperable objection to going *down*-stairs, and as the time was approaching when they were to be taken to the castle their owner was in a fright. Burnaby, however, got over the difficulty by taking up a pony in each arm and carrying them down to the courtyard. It is needless to enter at length upon the story of Burnaby's travels. Those erratic journeys, though they were prompted by a restless and adventurous disposition, often had a serious purpose, which, perhaps, excused them in the eyes of the commander-in-chief and the authorities, from whom leave of absence from duty was neither asked nor obtained.

Even while he was only a captain, in 1868, he was off to see what could be had in the way of fighting in Spain, Queen Isabella having just made her escape. But there was nothing to be done beyond converting the journey into what used to be called a "spree," including visits to theatres, a bull-fight, and other amusements, and a hasty excursion to Tangiers, where he met with strange company. Two years afterwards he was trying to get into Paris, then invested by the Germans, and failing to make his way into the city, took a run through Russia, went to Paris on his way back, and as the commune was then uppermost was arrested and had to use all his ready address to obtain his release and admission to the city, from which he escaped and returned to England. In 1873 he lay for four months at Naples, sick with the deadly typhoid which makes that place one of the most dangerous resorts in Europe. He passed through Spain on his way home, and returned thither in the following year, where he acted as special correspondent of the *Times*, and took part in the Carlist war, but by the end of the year was on his way to Central Africa to see Gordon. He had no sooner reached this destination and shaken hands with the governor-general than a paragraph in a newspaper, stating that an order had been issued by the Russian government prohibiting foreigners from entering Central Asia, fired his ambition to reach the forbidden territory in spite of the

Muscovite and all his works. To Russian Central Asia he would go at all hazards, and after making such preparations as he thought necessary for a long and steady ride over the Russian steppes in midwinter, he started for St. Petersburg, and was soon on the way to Khiva in the midst of the severest weather ever felt. It was this ride to Khiva which made Burnaby's name known far and wide; and it so aroused the suspicion and tyranny of the Russian government that the officials whom he met, having made their report, a telegram was sent to the war office or the Horse Guards in London demanding the recall of the traveller who was away without leave. Burnaby, as we all know, reached Khiva, and would have pushed on to Bokhara and Samarcand, the very heart of Central Asia, but the telegram of recall reached him from the Duke of Cambridge, ordering his immediate return to England.

Nothing could keep him at home, and in 1876 he and his man Radford were off for a journey on horseback through Asia Minor: a ride through Asiatic Turkey to Persia and back to Constantinople along the southern shore of the Black Sea. It must have been a strange sight to those who beheld this pair of giants riding onward and onward for no other object, so far as was known, than the search for adventure and the exploration of a territory little known, but full of interest, as it touched on the Russian frontier; and including people of many nationalities from Kurds and barbarous Turcomans to Persians, Greeks, and Armenians. This journey was far less difficult than the previous one, as few obstacles were met with, the Turks rather encouraging and expediting than preventing the travellers, whom they regarded as friendly Englishmen, at a time when war between their country and Russia was already imminent.

When that war broke out in 1877 Burnaby was eager to be in the thick of it, and if possible to strike a blow against Russia. For a captain of an English regiment of guards to take his sword into a quarrel in which England had no part would have been monstrous, so he sought some other means of being on the spot, and persuaded some of his numerous friends who had organized the Stafford House Committee for sending medical and surgical aid to



the Turkish army, to appoint him as their representative in the field, to second the work of their commissioner at Constantinople. The organization was an admirable one, and the surgeons, assistant surgeons, and dressers sent out did good work in succouring about 100,000 of the sick and wounded of the Turkish army. Burnaby did his work too. He visited the hospital at Adrianople, found it in excellent working order, and reported on it, and then went to another hospital at Sofia. But he had obtained from the commissioner at Constantinople a letter to Osman Pasha, the Turkish general at Plevna, and thither, as to the probable centre of the conflict, he meant to go, that he might be in the thick of the fight; and he actually proposed to Colonel Valentine Baker, who had entered the Turkish service, to make his way across the Balkans and get through the Russian lines into Plevna. He fought by Baker's side at the battle of Tarkeshan, and soon undertook the regulation of the fifth Turkish brigade. Through the terrific cold of that winter and in the face of repeated dangers he had plenty of fighting, and appeared to be as reckless of the fact that he was not warranted in giving military aid to the Turks as he was of the obstacles and hardships that would have killed weaker men, and had already struck poor Radford with death. In the spring of 1878 the condition of Radford was an additional reason for Burnaby's return to England, where the faithful servant and brave soldier died in his master's arms almost immediately on arriving at Dover.

Burnaby then turned his attention to politics, and also proposed for the hand of Miss Hawkins-Whitshead, the daughter of Sir St. Vincent Bentinck Hawkins-Whitshead, Bart., of county Wicklow. In 1880 he contested Birmingham in the Conservative interest (for he was a pronounced Conservative), but was unsuccessful, though he and his friend Lord Randolph Churchill were the recognized Conservative candidates.

Among his cherished intentions was that of crossing the Mediterranean in a balloon, or rather an aërial ship, steered from the French coast. He had made several balloon ascents, the first as early as 1864 from Cremorne Gardens in a Montgolfier,

the property of M. Godard. In March, 1882, he went up alone in the Eclipse balloon from Dover, and actually crossed the Channel, and after a perilous voyage descended at Envermeau in Normandy. This feat was much commented on, and drew attention to his disregard of the authorities and an alleged neglect of regular military duties, so that the commander-in-chief reprimanded him in a mild way for not having asked for permission to leave the country before crossing the Channel. In 1882 he became seriously ill, and though he went to Gibraltar and there slowly recovered a fair degree of health and much of his enormous strength, he continued to suffer from weak or imperfect action of the heart. The man who seemed to have gone out to meet death face to face was now liable to die at any moment; but it made little or no difference in his restless energy, nor in his desire to be in the midst of any conflict that might be going on.

He was again interesting himself in politics when the war in the Soudan roused him to action, and he was on his way to Suakim, where, as we have seen, he joined his friend Valentine Baker, and was soon in command of a detachment. We already know that in 1884 he became attached to the intelligence department under General Graham, and was badly wounded at El-Teb by the fragment of a shell striking him in the face. This necessitated his return to England, where the report of his determined courage had preceded him. For some months he was quiet, but his wound had healed; he was growing too stout, and his heart trouble increased. He believed that he needed more active exercise, and again he was looking somewhat eagerly to Egypt, and volunteered his services to Lord Wolseley for the expedition to rescue Gordon. The authorities had apparently grown rather tired of his erratic disregard of all ordinary responsibilities towards them, and he did not obtain a nomination for service in Egypt, so he carried out his previous plan, and went without permission, leaving those who were not in the secret to suppose that he was on his way to the Transvaal. His destination was only known when he telegraphed from Korti, and he then left that place to follow General Stewart with a

convoy of grain, and, as we have seen, fell in the midst of the enemy, fighting to the last. Upon the news of his death reaching her Majesty at Osborne Sir Henry Ponsonby telegraphed to Mrs. Burnaby:—"The Queen, who hears with deep regret the news of the death of Col. Burnaby, has commanded me to inquire after Mrs. Burnaby." That lady was then in Switzerland, where she had been obliged to pass the winter because of her delicate health, and the royal message was forwarded to her there.

The names of other officers of distinction and of military promise were in the list of the killed in that battle with a horde of barbarians. Major Wilfrid Arbuthnot Gough of the 1st (Royal) Dragoons had served with the military police in 1882, and had been present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and at the occupation of Cairo, where he received a medal and clasp, the fifth class of the Medjidie, and the khedive's medal. Altogether he had seen fifteen years' service. Major Walter Hyde Atherton of the 5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales) Dragoon Guards had taken the rank of major in a little over nine years, as he had entered the army in 1874. Major Ludovick Montefiore Carmichael of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers had entered in 1881 and obtained his majority in 1884. Captain Joseph Watkins William Darley of the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards, entered as lieutenant in 1874, and became captain in 1881. He had served with his regiment in Egypt in 1882, and was in the battles of Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir, and at the occupation of Cairo, for which services he received the medal with clasp and the khedive's star. Lieutenant Richard Wolfe, first on the list of lieutenants in the Royal Scots Greys (2d Dragoons), had seen seven years' service. Lieutenant Charles W. A. Law, of the 4th Dragoons (Royal Irish), had only received his commission in July, 1882. Lieutenant Alfred Pigott, of the Naval Brigade, had begun his career in 1861 as a cadet, was made sub-lieutenant in 1867, and lieutenant in 1872. Lord St. Vincent, of the 16th Lancers, who, as we have noted, was severely wounded and had to be placed on a baggage-camel, died soon afterwards of his injuries; and Lieutenant James Dunbar Guthrie of the Royal Horse Artillery shared the same fate. They were

taken to Abu-Klea and left there with the rest of the wounded under a strong guard when the main column marched on to the Nile. Admiral Jervis, who gained his peerage by winning the battle of St. Vincent in 1797, was created Baron Jervis, Earl, and afterwards Viscount St. Vincent. When he died, without issue, in 1823 the barony and earldom expired, but the viscountcy devolved by remainder on his nephew, the grandfather of John Edward Leveson Jervis, the officer who received his death-wound at Abu-Klea. He had succeeded to the title as fourth viscount on the death of his father in July, 1879, served in the Zulu War of 1879 as orderly officer to Major-general Marshall, and was present with the 17th Lancers in the engagements at the Zuinguin Mountain and Ulundi, for which service he obtained the medal and clasp. He also served as orderly officer to Brigadier-general MacGregor in the expedition against the Marrees in Southern Afghanistan in 1880, and in the Boer war of 1881 as adjutant of Barrow's Mounted Infantry. In 1882 he took part in the Egyptian campaign as aide-de-camp to Major-general Drury Lowe, commanding the cavalry division, and he was present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and the capture of Cairo. Lieutenant James Dunbar Guthrie, of the B Brigade of the Royal Horse Artillery, entered the service from the Royal Academy on January 25, 1877. This was his first campaign.

Yes, the list of the killed and wounded among what was comparatively a handful of men was distressing; but the situation made it imperative that if that small force was to accomplish its work, to reach Metammeh to communicate with Gordon at Khartûm and to await the arrival of the Nile column, and the commander-in-chief and his reserves from Korti, they must push on and occupy a position on the Nile bank. It was some time before the loss in men and camels could be realized. Boxes of ammunition, for which there were no camels, and the rifles of the killed and wounded men, were found upon the field. Much ammunition had been burned, many rifles broken, the fire from the burning cartridges catching the pack saddles of the dead or wounded camels and smouldering and fizzling in a horrible way. It was

weary work to collect the spears, banners, and swords left on the field by the enemy, and our men were surprised at not finding any shields such as had been used by the tribes who fought at El Teb. The Arabs had fled precipitately, leaving behind them nearly all that they possessed, which, however, did not appear to amount to much, the most valuable of the effects being a number of donkeys and several skins full of water, which were at once sent up to the wounded in the square. There was but little "loot" beyond the arms, and a few scattered garments, rugs, prayer-carpets, and ordinary camp utensils, nor would there have been much time to appropriate it if there had been, for our men were suffering agonies of thirst, and as the square moved slowly on were wondering whether the hussars, who had ridden forward on their weak, starved, and perishing horses, would find the wells before dark, or whether there would be orders to return to the seriba for the night. Soon a hussar was seen urging on his horse to bring the welcome tidings that Barrow had occupied the place without opposition, and a fresh effort was made to push on towards the so-called wells—really a series of pits in the sand of the valley bed with little basins at the bottom into which the water trickled. But that water was life and strength, and the hussars had enough to do to manage their horses, who were wild at the sight and smell of it, and had to be controlled when they were suffered to go down in turn and drink. As the square approached, wells were told off to the different regiments. It may be imagined how eager the poor fellows were for a deep and unmeasured draught after their battle and their long march in the sun; but they behaved admirably, and there was no difficulty in keeping the best well clear for the supply of drink to the sick and wounded in the hospital. The water was muddy, but cool and sweet. There was little or nothing to be got to eat, except where any of the men had pocketed a few bits of biscuit. The order was given to bivouac in square. The hussars had brought in a couple of wounded Arabs, and letters and papers found on the bodies of others of the enemy had to be examined by Colonel Wilson—a duty which could only be performed before

night set in. Soon after sunset a detachment was sent back to the seriba to bring in the camels with the commissariat stores, but they would not return till morning, and as the blankets, great-coats, and coverings were all with the baggage at the seriba and the night was bitterly cold, there was not much sleep to be got except by those who were exceptionally hardy or who contrived to get between two camels and cover themselves with the baggage nets. The detachment sent to the seriba had no sleep at all, for they had to work hard all night to get the stores together from the places where they had been used as parapets, then to load up the camels, and to get away with the whole contents and accompanied by the occupants of the seriba, which had not been attacked. At about seven in the morning they were seen approaching, much to the delight of the men, who now had rations served out to them, and were able to get their first square meal since noon of the 16th, and this was ten o'clock in the morning of the 18th. A burying party was then told off to return to the field of battle and bury our dead. A staff-officer counted 1100 bodies of the enemy on the ground round the place which had been occupied by the square. It was estimated from reports received that about 12,000 of the Arabs were engaged, though only about 5000 made the actual charge. The bodies of sixty of our men were buried at about the spot where the square was attacked, and where it was reported that a gunner named Smith had gallantly defended Lieutenant Guthrie. At the moment when the other gunners had been borne back with the rush he had kept back his assailants with a handspike, which perhaps, as it did not twist and could not "jam," was as good a weapon as some others used on the occasion.

Four prisoners who had surrendered had been brought in by the convoy coming from the seriba. They were blacks who had been in Hicks's army, and whom the Arabs had compelled to fight us. One of these was a sergeant and spoke in very fair Italian. The information elicited from them was that the enemy had consisted of Arabs and regulars from Berber; Arabs from Kordofan, some of the Mahdi's troops from Omdurman, men levied in the

district of Metammeh, and Jalin and Awadiyeh Arabs from the surrounding country, in all 9000 to 11,000 men. The enemy's sharpshooters were black soldiers of Hicks's army, and of the garrisons of Obeid and Bara, which had surrendered to the Mahdi. There were also a few hunters from Kordofan. The charge on the square had been made by Duguaim, Kenana, and Hamra Arabs from Kordofan, and this portion of the force, with their sheikhs and emirs, had been almost destroyed. The men of Jalin and Metammeh were in reserve, and the cavalry scouts were the Awadiyeh. Omdurman had fallen about a fortnight before, and thus a large number of the Mahdi's troops were set free, though the force which had been defeated at Abu-Klea was but the advanced guard of a large army which it was expected had already reached Metammeh.

Some of the papers found on the field were important and interesting. There was a copy of a set of prayers supposed to be composed by the Mahdi. These were being read by the sheikh Musa when he broke into the square. There were letters from the Mahdi to chiefs and governors (among them one to the governor of Shendy), exhorting them to fight the infidels; among them was a letter from the Emir of Berber, Muhammed El Kheir, to one Sheikh Muhammed Zein saying: "It behoves you to get ready with energy and activity, and to carry on the holy war against the enemies of the faith, and to fight against the heathen and the believers in more than one God. You must be patient and steadfast and make raids. As our beloved, the Emir Sad Salim, has asked you for reinforcements and sought your aid for victory, therefore give him reinforcements and help him to victory. Go to him with all the men of your emirate. God Almighty has said, 'If they (the believers) seek your aid to ensure the victory of the faith, it is your duty to aid them;' and the Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings, has said, 'The believers are like a building, one part strengthens the other.' Therefore, on receipt of this letter, proceed with all your followers to the Emir Sad Salim, and do not wait for your ammunition, for you are not to fight with the enemies of God with ammunition, but with spears and swords.

Take, therefore, the equipment you have with you and proceed to your brother the Emir Sad Salim at once and without delay. This day all the emirs, the allies, and agents have been instructed by letter to move over to the western side of the Nile. Peace!"

This letter, signed Muhammed El Kheir, was dated "18th Rabia el Awwal, which represents the 4th of January (1885), and it had the following postscript:—"Warn all your followers to take their water-skins, their leathern sacks, and food for the road: for if you meet the enemies of God it will be in the desert and not in houses. Every one must take his travelling equipment. This is the time to sacrifice wealth and life in the cause of God. You must obey the command of the Almighty, and fight the good fight of the sacrifice of your wealth and your lives. Be of good cheer, great victory and much plenty await you, for God has promised it to you, oh ye congregations of believing Moslems."

Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, in his interesting account of the march to Metammeh, says: that from this letter it is evident that the concentration of the large body of Arabs to oppose the column at Abu-Klea took place after Stewart's occupation of Gakdul, and that if the general had gone straight across, as was at one time intended, he would have met with no opposition in the desert and probably not much at Metammeh. The original plan had to be given up for want of transport. Another thousand camels, which might have been obtained in November, would have enabled the troops to follow Gordon's directions, "Come by way of Metammeh, or Berber, only by these two roads. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad." The occupation of Gakdul had made known to the enemy that the column was moving on the route to Metammeh. Stewart's first march was a surprise. The Arabs did not know of it till the morning he started; and Omdurman not having then fallen, the Mahdi could not have sent down so many troops even if he had had time to do so.

That he had made a general levy for the purpose of sending a large force seems to have been shown by the fact that many of the Arabs who fell fighting with spear and sword only were mere



lads of sixteen or seventeen. Among the letters found on the field were some relating to dissensions among the Mahdi's followers; but judging from the bearing and declarations of the two prisoners who had been brought in, the belief in his authority and in his eventual victory over us was unbroken.

If anything were to be done there was not an hour to lose. The chief question was whether it would be better to make a night march, fatigued as the men were, and to push on at once for the Nile, which might be reached by daylight next morning; or to camp at night at the wells at Shebacat or elsewhere on the route, and start fresh after breakfast. On this point opinions were divided, Sir Charles Wilson advocating the latter plan, while Sir Herbert Stewart, who was in chief command, preferred the former, as notwithstanding their want of rest the men were in good spirits and could march the twenty-five miles to the Nile and still have time for a good rest before they would be called upon to fight.

The march was to be along the Metammeh road, past the Shebacat wells, and to within a few miles of Metammeh, when a turn was to be made to the right that the column might reach the river about three miles above the town. If this could be effected before daybreak the town might be attacked after the men had rested and had breakfast. But the difficulties of the night march had not been fully estimated. The ordinary guides could not lead the way, and the only man able to act as guide was Ali Loda, the robber who had been taken in the desert, and who declared, not untruly, that he knew the country well, that there was one part of the journey where there were many trees which would make the way difficult to traverse on a moonless night. However, the promise of a reward and the intimation that he must go, sufficed to induce him, and at half-past three in the afternoon of the 18th of January the march commenced, the hussars going in front, the guards next, and then the convoy heavies and mounted-infantry. While the route lay down the valley and over a mountain spur with a view over the plain reaching to the Nile all went fairly well, and only an occasional halt was made; but when the sun had set and the level road,

which could be seen by starlight, was succeeded by a rough broken track, full of ruts and tall clinging grass, the starving camels wanted to stop to feed, and were so weak that they began to stumble and stagger about. The men had to halt to permit the baggage camels to close up. For about two hours this continued, and then the way was amidst a thicket of thorny acacias, between which only narrow tracks permitted the troops to pass. Here the confusion was terrible on account of the darkness, and more than once the sudden appearance of the rear-guard in front of the column made it seem as though the march had been in a circle. The cavalry got through pretty well, but the guards, who had been dismounted in case of an attack, had some difficulty, and the baggage camels were so jammed and entangled in the thick scrub that some were left behind and others were only released with considerable difficulty. There were frequent halts, and men and beasts were weary, hungry, and faint for want of water. On reaching open ground again a halt was called. Ali Loda said that they then would have only a straight march to Metammeh, and Sir Herbert Stewart determined to endeavour to reach the Nile without fighting, and to engage the enemy only when our men had the river at their backs and could make sure of water. At about one o'clock in the morning it was calculated that the point (about fifteen miles) at which they were to turn off in order to strike the river bank had been reached. Ali Loda was questioned, and was still confident, though the night was dark and there were now no tracks to go by. A "bearing" was taken from the map, and the guide, who was really doing his work well, was told to take them clear and out of sight of Metammeh. The country was pretty fair for travelling, though there were scattered trees and no path was visible; but the terrible journey through the maze of mimosa scrub had so completely disorganized the column, and men and animals were so worn out with fatigue that it was exceedingly difficult to make even slow progress, and all was in confusion. Camel-drivers having fallen asleep the laden brutes got loose and went stumbling on in the darkness, passing the advanced hussars and even the guides,

so that the column seemed to be led by a struggling crowd of men and riderless camels, which kept on and on and could not be driven back. The moment the halt was sounded men lay down to try to snatch a few minutes' sleep even amidst the groans of the beasts and the moans of their drivers, which rose, so Colonel Wilson tells us, in one continuous roar, which must have been heard at Metammeh, and probably gave the enemy the first notice of the approach of our men.

As Sir Herbert Stewart desired to reach the Nile without being seen he had perhaps better have left the guide to take them in the way which he was going, though it was thought that it would have led to a point too far from the town, and the plan had been to arrive at a place not more than three miles distant. Progress was slow—not more than a mile an hour; and half an hour before daylight a halt was called that they might see where they were and to give time for the rear to close up.

They could not at anyrate reach the Nile before daylight, and so the guide was ordered to take the shortest way that they might arrive without being discovered by the enemy. He was accordingly placed under a cavalry escort and turned in another direction. The Nile was then about six miles distant, and after another two miles of slow and wearisome marching the advanced men came upon some herds of goats, which were quickly appropriated and supplied the lucky fellows in front with a draught of milk apiece. The officer sent forward to reconnoitre reported that he had seen Metammeh, heard the beating of the tomtoms, and observed the troops there in regular formation moving over the gravel ridge on which the town was built. It was now of little use trying to avoid being seen, and on mounting a ridge our men could see the valley beneath, a wide belt of vegetation with the river running through it, a number of large regularly built villages, a large town about four miles to the left in front, and another smaller town on the other side—the former Metammeh, the latter Shendy. Numbers of the enemy were moving down from the town, some coming straight towards our column or our hussars, who had moved forward as far as

it was prudent for their tired horses to advance; others were coming along the river bank to intercept us, and it seemed that they were stretching out right and left, and would attempt to close round our rear, while the din of the tomtoms could now be heard on all sides. It was now about seven o'clock, and Sir Herbert Stewart, seeing that our men would have to fight their way to the river, determined to halt and let them breakfast, then close up the transport and march for the river bank, with the fighting men going between the transport and the town. Preparations were made for forming a seriba on an open space of gravelly ground, where all the baggage camels were packed close together in the centre, the riding camels round them, and the troops forming an irregular oblong outside all. The seriba was formed of boxes, sacks, camel saddles, barrels, brushwood, and sand. The men and the officers worked with a will notwithstanding the previous night's exhausting duty. One officer, who had been in the hot corner at Abu-Klea, had been on arduous duty ever since, and had had no sleep and little food or drink for forty-eight hours. During the time that the seriba was being formed the enemy's sharpshooters began firing with their Remingtons from the surrounding tall grass and clumps of bushes, and the exposed situation of the place, chosen that it might not be suddenly attacked, caused the position of our men to be far from pleasant. The seriba could not be "rushed" by a charge of the Arabs, but there was so much cover from which the enemy could fire that it was not safe to leave the shelter of the boxes and saddles. Great numbers of camels were shot, and the centre, where the field-hospital had been formed, was, so to speak, in the midst of a pattering hail of bullets from the sharpshooters, who were so concealed that their position could only be descried by the puffs of smoke. There could be but little opportunity of breakfasting in any sense beyond that of hastily partaking of much-needed food—and neither rations nor water were plentiful. Probably many of the men got little or nothing, and many were so exhausted that directly they crouched or lay down in the shelter of the breastwork it was as much as the officers

could do to keep them awake. Yet as the attack grew hotter the parapet in front of the men was built higher, and in some places boxes were so piled as to intercept the slanting fire, while a few men were sent out to occupy a knoll which might otherwise have been taken advantage of by the enemy. Thirty brave guardsmen volunteered for this duty, and each carried something to form a breastwork, so that a post was established there.

Inside the principal intrenchment, or seriba, men were falling, and at a little after ten in the morning Sir Herbert Stewart, who was passing round to see whether the men were getting breakfast, was struck by a bullet just above the groin, and so seriously wounded that he had to be immediately carried to the hospital, where the surgical staff, in spite of their fatigue and the continued demand made upon their exertions, were doing their duty with a noble courage and devotion.

Almost at the same time that the general was struck Mr. Cameron, the war correspondent of the *Standard*, was mortally wounded in the back, and soon afterwards Mr. St. Leger Herbert of the *Morning Post* was shot dead, and Mr. Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph* was wounded but not severely. He was one of the first of the volunteers to carry the boxes, &c., to form the breastwork to protect the men who were to occupy the knoll already mentioned, and it was a troublesome job, as the journey was for about forty yards under fire. Afterwards, when the party of the 2nd Life Guards and Greys under the command of Lord Cochrane were sent to build up the breastwork so that it was converted into a redoubt, the work was done under a still warmer fire in which officers and men with some of the sappers were actively working. The construction of another redoubt to protect the hospital was nearly as dangerous, for bullets were flying about from all directions, while boxes had to be carried inward from the redoubt which had been made in front of the seriba. There was great difficulty in getting about among the camels, and it was some time before the men who were to form the square for the advance could muster after leaving the redoubts so far completed as to be finished by the

garrison who would stay behind to protect them. During this time about five-and-twenty men were killed, and it was quite early during the confusion that Cameron was shot in the back as he rose from the place where he had seated himself near his camels and reached his hand for a box of sardines which his servant had brought for him. St. Leger Herbert, a delightful companion and highly accomplished man, a great friend both of General Stewart and Colonel Wilson, had gone with the wounded general to the hospital, where he assisted the aide-de-camp to attend to him. He had been writing at Stewart's dictation and had just come back to fetch his water-bottle before joining the square when he was killed on the spot.

Cameron had had a presentiment of death during the previous night march and was strangely solemn and foreboding: a very different thing from being afraid, for probably few men knew less of fear. He was held in high regard by officers and men as well as by his colleagues; and he had been through greater perils than most of those who were his companions in Egypt. Few of his friends who met him at the Savage Club in London (the writer of these lines among them) just before his departure for the Soudan thought that he was going on his last campaign. His description of the journey of the desert column from Korti to Abu-Kru was not received at the office of the *Standard* in London till after his death; and there seems to be in it a strange sense of impending trouble. This letter is characteristic of the style of one of the ablest of war correspondents.

"General Stewart's previous march to Gakdul and back was more of the nature of a successful reconnaissance made in search of water. We were now in grim earnest bound on a dash straight across, to plunge unsupported into the heart of the enemy's country, and amidst a population all of them avowed disciples of the Crescentade against infidels everywhere, inaugurated by Mahomed Achmet, the Mahdi of the Soudan. No wonder that the natives who watched looked upon us as men doomed to destruction, for had not three large armies more numerous than ours, and as well equipped, already passed over the same road,

bound on a similar errand to ours, and had they not all perished to a man? But what the natives did not realize, although some among them were beginning to have a glimmering of the fact, was that these great white soldiers, although they did not bully and kick and tyrannize over them, were still a very different kind of fighting material to the white-livered, despicable Egyptian and murdering Bashi-Bazouk, to whom they had hitherto been accustomed. Only Greeks, Copts, and blacks—chiefly runaway slaves—would accompany us as servants; and here I may refer once more to the wonderful care and forethought that has characterized the preparations for this expedition. In sending for Somaules to Aden to act as camel-drivers, Lord Wolseley must be given credit for wonderful prescience. Had he depended upon Egyptians or Dongalese, we should now be in serious difficulty, for not even the courbash, did we care to use it, would induce these people to go on. True, a detachment of Egyptian soldiers are doing convoy work as camel-drivers; but these for some time have been under English officers, and even they have not behaved well when thirst and fatigue has had to be endured. The private individual who may essay to accompany our army while campaigning in the East must be prepared to face many crushing disasters and heartbreaking disappointments so far as his personal transport and commissariat arrangements are concerned. Troops depend for these matters on their regimental organization, and so are able without anxiety to devote to their proper duties their entire energies. Not so the press correspondent; and thus, when five miles out in the desert we overtook the column, our horror and dismay may be referred to, but cannot be imagined, at discovering that our baggage and water camels were not with the others, as they ought to have been. There was nothing for it but to canter back, search for and find the missing men and animals, and endeavour to overtake the column again at its encampment for the night. We should have lost our way had not the camp-fires that the men lit after dark served as beacons to guide us over the plain. In the desert, water is the great thing. Food we can do without for a period, and not suffer much, but never water.

And so the first thing to do on halting was to examine the skins that contained our precious supply; and then by the friendly bivouac of the mounted infantry detachment on rear-guard, we lay on the sand to try and snatch some sleep ere the bugles sounded. For the waning moon would rise at half-past one, and at that hour General Stewart had ordered the start to be made. Apparently the last fire to remain alight had only flickered out and silence had but reigned for a few minutes, when the beautiful but weirdlike *réveille* of the British army startled us unwillingly into life again. Once or twice only during my campaigning experiences have I heard the *réveille* sound with feelings of satisfaction. The last occasion was the morning of the battle of Tamai. All night we had lain silent while the enemy cracked volleys of musketry into us from the bush outside our zereebah. But with the first note of the *réveille* we sprang to our feet as one man, glad all of us to think that now our turn had come. And before the bugles ceased the Arabs, too, had stopped their firing and retired to the ambush from which they subsequently sprang upon us. With very different disposition do we listen here in the desert to the morning call; for it is the signal to jump up with unwilling energy and load our moaning camels, and prepare to jog on again wearily in the dark. To load a camel properly, even in daylight, is a work of art. The cargo must be balanced exactly, one half on either side of his back, otherwise it will inevitably, sooner or later, tumble off, and there is nothing more heartbreaking than to see one's baggage tumble off on the line of march—particularly when in an enemy's country. The last rope had hardly been fastened when the 'fall in' sounded, and then for an hour men and camels grouped into their places in the dark; and at half-past two we moved off our ground, the pebble-strewed desert glistening in the dim moonlight as if it were covered with a coat of yellow shining varnish. Frequently would the bugles sound the halt in rear, to allow time for stragglers to close up, for the officer commanding the rearguard had the usual orders to leave nothing behind. With him were the spare camels, and if a loaded one tumbled, or lay down to die, as they



frequently did, a fresh beast at once took his place, and so wearily until morning we silently marched—few cared to converse—gliding across the desert like one long shadow. At half-past five what looked like the reflection of a huge conflagration appeared on the horizon. It signalled the approach of day; and when it was light the bugles sounded a merry march, the men shouted and talked cheerily, and even the camels looked mildly contented. At ten we halted for breakfast, and tried to get a little sleep until two, when we were away again, striding on sometimes across stretches of sand, sometimes over stony ground, and anon through mimosa country; but ever the sun shone fiercely overhead. A peculiarity of the deserts that border the Nile is that the mouths of men and beasts who traverse them are always parched. Those who have experience know that it is no use to drink continuously. That only increases the torture, but it is difficult to resist the temptation, and so the men of the Sussex regiment, unlike their comrades of the heavies and mounted infantry who had marched up from Wady Halfa, drank on unceasingly and surreptitiously at their water-skins. In vain the officers restrained them, and when the march at last came to an end for the day it was discovered also that so had almost the water, while seventy miles had yet to be traversed before a plentiful supply could be obtained.

The skins, too, served out to the heavies had leaked; in short there was scarcity of water with all. Lucky was he who, having ventured to bring with him a horse, could give that horse a drink; and never shall I forget the blank look of despair with which one journalist announced that he 'had no water for his horse and none for himself.' But it was not always the skins that had leaked; sometimes, too, had the honesty of the servants in charge, for soldiers were foraging about offering any price, even a dollar, for as much as would make a single drink.

Again, early in the morning, we started, but there was now no unwillingness to get on; for with many delay meant torture—perhaps death—while progress meant water and life. The wells of Hambok, forty-seven miles out from Korti, were found empty. Only a bucketful of the precious fluid was there, and that was given to a

couple of horses that otherwise would have died. The column did not even halt at Hambok, but pushed on to El Howeyet, eight miles further, where a better supply was expected. But there, too, ill-luck awaited us. The convoy that started from Korti the day before had only left El Howeyet half an hour previous to our arrival—so quickly had we travelled—and they had drunk all the water. But we halted at El Howeyet until evening, and by that time enough water—if that name may be given to a fluid of the colour and consistency of pea-soup—had accumulated to allow every man to have a slight drink. So wild were some of the soldiers with thirst, that for some time it seemed as if a tumult might set in; but Major Wardroper ordered all to fall in as they stood, and so one by one, and in order, were they supplied with their share. On again we went until dark, the camels striding at their quickest pace, as anxious as their riders that water in plenty should be reached; and on again in the morning too we went, making for the wells of Abu Halfa, which, although some distance off the main track, were eight or ten miles nearer than Gakdul. There the guides assured us would water be found in plenty. In front the squadron of the 19th Hussars pushed on, for the horses had only drunk a quart a piece during the previous twenty-four hours. They were much distressed, of course, and, if not watered that day, would many of them assuredly die. At first the well of Abu Halfa looked anything but promising. A shallow pool of water, green on the top, we saw, which was well-nigh emptied before even the horses had satisfied their thirst. But then a clear, bubbling spring, was discovered at the bottom, which, when cleared, afforded sufficient for everybody; only the wretched camels went without. For a period the scene at the Abu Halfa well was exciting in the extreme. Chattering Somaules, wild with thirst, barred from the main pool until the fighting men had drunk their full, grubbed frantically in the sand, and in an inconceivably short period dug holes, at the bottom of which a little water collected, that was promptly lapped up. The soldiers, too, could hardly be restrained from throwing discipline aside and thronged in on all sides, while in the background were plunging horses and camels

broken loose and fighting desperately with their human masters for a place. Yesterday at noon we reached Gakdul, and until to-day have been busy watering our exhausted animals and preparing ourselves for the march to Metammeh, which begins to-morrow. What the result of that march may be the wires will have told ere this letter reaches England. At present we know not whether our road is to be barred by thousands, or whether we shall reach the Nile without firing a shot. In camp parlance it is 'even betting' on either contingency. We only know that if we fight at all it will not be for victory, but for very existence; for behind us there will be no retreat."

Mr. Cameron, though he possessed in a pre-eminent degree the qualifications necessary for a war correspondent, and was admired and respected not only by his literary colleagues but by the officers and men of the service, had not received any special training as a journalist. He had a remarkable faculty for condensed and yet picturesque description; and though he did not appear to be exceptionally powerful of physique, his tireless energy and fearless daring, united to a quiet and almost self-depreciatory manner, and a constant determination that the paper which he represented should receive all the intelligence that could possibly be forwarded from the scene of action, gave him considerable influence, and on several occasions had enabled him to get information "through," when some other correspondents were less fortunate either because of obstacles at head-quarters or difficulties of transport which required unusual exertion, courage, and address. He had been engaged during six years in the service of the *Standard* in various parts of the world, and had performed feats of daring which made him famous among his companions, who regarded him no less for his cheery courage than for his geniality and kindness. Mr. Cameron had gone out to India at a comparatively early age and was there engaged in mercantile business, which he relinquished on the outbreak of the Afghan war, when he obtained the post of special correspondent for the *Bombay Gazette*. The excellence of his descriptive letters soon attracted so much attention that in the following year, when the advance of Ayoub Khan and the British

defeat at Maiwand caused a renewal of the war, his offer to become special correspondent for the *Standard* was accepted, and he was directed to join the column which, under General Phayre, was preparing to march to the relief of Candahar. Seven days after leaving Bombay he reached Quettah, for he travelled night and day, and rode up the Bolan Pass from Sibi in thirty-six hours. He was the first to ride with the news of General Roberts' victory to the nearest telegraph post, which he reached a day and a half before his competitors and the government couriers, and was back at Candahar in time to accompany the first party which went out to the battle-field of Maiwand, whence he sent home a description of the scene and of the fighting which established his reputation for literary ability as well as for enterprise.

Not long after his return to Bombay the Boer insurrection broke out, and he at once crossed to Natal, where he arrived before any of the correspondents sent from England could reach the spot. He was present at the battles of Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and the calamitous fight at Majuba Hill, where he was knocked down and taken prisoner by the Boers, but on the following day contrived to send off a message with a famous description of the battle. He returned to England on the conclusion of the war, but directly news arrived of the riots in Alexandria he set out for Egypt and was on board the admiral's flag-ship *Invincible* at the bombardment of Alexandria, continuing with the British forces, witnessing and describing every engagement until the occupation of Cairo. Cameron was one of those men who get tired of what to most people would seem absolutely needful rest, and never seemed quite to realize the energy and ability with which he did his work. In reply to expressions recognizing his success, he would say, "I did my best," and so far from assuming any merit he frequently appeared to be under the impression that he might have given greater satisfaction. At anyrate he was eager for work, and left Cairo for Madagascar, where he soon perceived, and in a series of excellent letters described, the state of affairs consequent on French interference. It was uncertain, however, whether there would be any fighting, and he therefore crossed the Pacific to Melbourne,

and thence made his way to Tonquin, where hostilities had just commenced between the French and the natives. He was present at the engagement in which the former failed to carry the defences erected by the "black flags," but as no English correspondents were allowed to remain with the French forces he started on his way home. Osman Digma's forces were then threatening Suakim, and Mr. Cameron, on reaching Suez, set out for the scene of conflict, and was in time to take part in the attempt of Baker Pasha's force against the rebels. He then had a very narrow escape from being killed, but remained at Suakim till the arrival of General Graham's expedition, and accompanied it to Tokar on to the battles of El-Teb and Tamanieb. He then returned to England, but in a few weeks was again on the way to Egypt to go up the Nile with the first boats of Lord Wolseley's expedition, to one or two brief extracts from some of the letters describing which we have already given attention. Well might the *Standard* say in concluding a notice of his untimely death:—"The Arab bullet which ended his brilliant yet still promising career has carried away the foremost of the little band of correspondents who daily risk their lives for the public good; it has also deprived this journal of one of the most earnest, indefatigable, and unselfish of workers, and his friends of a most genial, lovable, and kindly comrade."

One of these friends and fellow war correspondents, writing of him, says—"In camp he was independent in demeanour without any bluster, mindful of the interests of his paper without meanly trying to overreach others, sagacious without cunning. His stern face, deep voice, and vigorous bearing made him distinguished among his fellow-correspondents, while his fearless honesty, his frank confession of others' successes, his hatred of swagger and underhandedness, gained him the respect of all competitors. In times of war the 'special,' let him be never so well recommended individually to the chiefs in command, never so popular personally, finds that he has to assert himself, and often with unmistakable emphasis, if he wishes to see the interests of his paper properly respected and served: and Cameron was never backward in putting his foot down if occasion required. But the judgment which

characterized him made him respected everywhere; and if at any special juncture a selection of pressmen had to be made, he was certain to be among the chosen few, while the fact that as a rule he stood upon his rights on points affecting the general welfare rather than his own individual advantage, constituted him after a fashion a champion of the rest. . . . On the march I have seen a good deal of him. We went together from Quetta to Candahar with Biddulph's column. It was, if I remember right, his first essay in war correspondence, and bade fair to be his last, for he was overtaken by fever and travelled more like an invalid than a soldier. Sartorius 'of the Beluchis' proved then a friend indeed, and as in addition to every other talent that able officer is an excellent cook, I have often sat on the shingles on Afghan hillsides and among the boulders in some dry stream bed—as a rule the 'roads' of the country—and in the humble capacity of scullery-maid to Sartorius's cook helped to prepare a warm mess of milk and oatmeal or corn-flour for our sick companion. There was one day a rather special 'alarm' sounded. The enemy had really been seen this time. Somebody even said that firing was reported. 'Now don't you get off your doolie (or stretcher) till I send to you,' said Sartorius to Cameron as he hurried off himself to see if his company were falling in properly. But no sooner was the invalid quite certain that his nurse was out of sight than out he crept from under the curtains of the doolie, and dragging himself on all-fours up to an eminence, set himself down there revolver in hand, and there an hour later I found him, looking so ill and spectral that I remember thinking he would never get better. When Sartorius came back he 'wigged' him, to which all that Cameron said was, 'Do you think I came here to sit inside a doolie when there's shooting and all kinds of larks going on?'

Speaking of their having again met in Egypt the same correspondent says, "I had gone out to the Ramleh fortifications, and was trying to pass without attracting our sentry's attention up to a point whence I thought a short stalk might give me a glimpse of the enemy's outposts. Under a giant fig-tree, heavily laden with black fruit, I suddenly encountered Cameron. We exchanged the

usual 'hullo' of friends meeting unexpectedly, and then he said, 'Where are you going?' 'To those palm-trees along that bank, if I could,' I replied. 'Can't,' said Cameron. 'I have been waiting here an hour to see if that blessed sentry of ours will go away, but he won't; and he says that if I try to go over the ditch he'll shoot at me. Those are his orders. But I don't mind having a try all the same,' he added. The sentry, however, was a veritable lynx, and eventually we had to content ourselves with figs and conversation on the spot where we had met. And the memory is still fresh in my mind of the friendliness with which Cameron, who had been in Alexandria from the first, put me as a new-comer through the whole business and posted me up to date. . . . In action he kept his head admirably cool, saw more than most of his competitors, and in his arrangements for getting his despatches back to the telegraph-box always showed a remarkable sagacity. I remember his cheery 'good morning' as he rode past me where I stood writing a telegram on my saddle on the field at Tel-el-Kebir, and after the fight we sat and rested together in one of Arabi's tents. Together we went to Lord Wolseley, where he stood on the bridge eating grapes out of his helmet, and asked him about the chance of our specials getting through, Herbert Stewart, and I think Major Gough coming up to join in the conversation about the fight that ensued. We travelled together to Cairo, and then parted, I coming straight home, he remaining."

This account of the duties, the dangers, and the responsibilities of those special correspondents to whom reference has been made will not be out of place in the story of England's intervention in Egypt; for the special war correspondent has become a recognized representative of the public desire to learn all that may be safely made known of the progress and achievements of any conflict in which the British arms may be engaged, and no account of modern warfare would be complete, it might almost be said that no popular and unbiassed account of a modern campaign would be possible, without his aid. It should be remembered, too, that many, if not most, of the special war correspondents have taken active

part in military service, either as commissioned officers or as holding a temporary appointment as recognized attachés; and Mr. Cameron's knowledge of and familiarity with military subjects was considerable.

Mr. St. Leger Herbert was really a distinguished public servant, and his brilliant talents and the offices which he had held gave him a position of peculiar influence, to which his remarkable social qualities added the sincere regard of all who knew him. He was a member of that branch of the distinguished Herbert family, of which Lord Carnarvon is the head. His grandfather, William Herbert, Dean of Manchester, was the third son of the first Earl of Carnarvon, and the dean's second son, Captain Frederick Charles Herbert, was the father of St. Leger Algernon by his marriage with the youngest daughter of the late Captain Henry Stuart, of the 39th Regiment. Mr. St. Leger Herbert was in his thirty-fifth year, having been born on the 16th of August, 1850. Although so young he had seen great and varied service, and distinguished himself on many occasions. He was a scholar of Wadham College, and obtained a first class at the Oxford Moderations. His first public appointment was with Lord Dufferin, when that nobleman was governor-general of the Dominion of Canada. He afterwards acted as private secretary to Lord Wolseley (then Sir Garnet Wolseley) on the occasion of the annexation of Cyprus, and was also civil secretary to Sir Garnet when he proceeded to South Africa as high commissioner. For his services on these occasions Mr. Herbert was made a commander of St. Michael and St. George. He was present at the taking of Sekukuni's mountain, for which he obtained the South African medal. Mr. Herbert was also civil secretary to Sir Frederick Roberts in South Africa, and when that general returned to England he was made secretary to the Transvaal commission. He served with the mounted infantry at Tel-el-Kebir as a volunteer, for which he obtained the Egyptian medal. He was present two years later at the engagements of El-Teb and Tamasi, where he acted as galloper to Sir H. Stewart, and obtained the clasp. At Tamasi he received a severe wound, but



his youth and good constitution enabled him quickly to recover from it and to go to Korti as a special correspondent that he might join the desert column, which at the moment of his death—its commander seriously wounded, its men falling under the fire of the enemy then closing round it—was again forming in square, a small, but fearless, body of grimly earnest men, determined to fight their way to the Nile or die in the attempt.

In England it was considered probable that General Stewart's plan would be, if he found the Arabs in force in an intrenched position at Metammeh, to abstain from attacking them, and to form a fortified camp on the banks of the Nile a short distance lower down the river, a position which he would probably be able to hold against the attacks of any number of the enemy. General Graham, who had returned from Suakim to London, wrote a letter to the *Standard*, dated the 26th of January, in which he said:—

“At a time when all minds are anxiously straining for any intelligence from the gallant little band under General Stewart, the following suggestion may, in default of any certainty, tend somewhat to alleviate our fears. Should General Stewart on approaching Metammeh have found the rebels strongly intrenched, he may have wisely declined attacking, but leaving them on his left, have struck the Nile, and then followed the left bank, with the intention of making El Hadju, above the Sixth Cataract, where he would have the best chance of meeting with Gordon's steamers, as the river will probably no longer permit of their going below that point. By following the river Stewart would have his left flank protected, and would no longer have to carry a water supply. El Hadju is about fifty miles above Metammeh, and Stewart may have reflected, that besides being the boldest this would be the most prudent course, as his position at El Hadju, in co-operation with Gordon's steamers, would be in every respect vastly stronger than if besieged in an intrenched position below Metammeh. He would, by holding El Hadju, also turn one of the most formidable passes of the Nile whence the rebels can most seriously threaten the navigation.

I may be permitted to add that my personal knowledge of the combined daring and prudence of General Stewart's character inclines me to believe that, given the conditions I imagine, this course of action would commend itself to him as best calculated to impress the rebels with a dream of the white soldier's unconquerable power, and his gallant men with his own high sense of confidence. Should he have adopted this course, we may have no certain tidings for at least another week, as Stewart could not afford to weaken his small force by detaching an escort with despatches until firmly established. Some slight confirmation of my supposition is given by a letter from the late Major Carmichael, who fell in the glorious fight of Abu-Klea, stating that in his opinion Stewart's force would move straight to Khartûm."

The old proverb, "circumstances alter cases," was, however, exemplified in this instance; and whatever may have been the plans originally proposed, here was our small expedition again diminished by the continuous fire of the enemy upon their position, the general placed *hors de combat*, and with an immediate necessity for pushing on, even in face of a probable repetition of the tactics displayed at Abu-Klea. The command devolved upon Sir Charles Wilson as the senior officer, whose appointment had been rather to the direction of the intelligence department, and to what may be called the military scientific duty of exploration, inquiry, and topographical information, than to direct duty on the field. Not a moment was lost, however, and Sir Charles showed both tact and judgment in asking the next senior officer, Colonel Boscawen, to take executive command of the square, Lord C. Beresford remaining to take charge of the force left to garrison the seriba, consisting of the 19th Hussars (whose horses were too worn out to act as cavalry), the royal artillery with their guns under Norton and Du Boulay, half the royal engineers under Dorward, the naval brigade, immediately commanded by Lord C. Beresford, and half the heavy camel regiment under Davison of the 16th Lancers, Major Barrow, under Lord Charles Beresford, being in command of the whole force.

Sir Herbert Stewart, though he had an impression that his



GENL SIR GERALD GRAHAM R.E.V.C. K.C.B. G.C.M.G.

COMMANDER OF THE EXPEDITION IN THE EASTERN CAMPAIGN 1854 AND 1855

GENERAL OF THE ARMY IN 1861



wound would prove fatal, was so calm and collected that he was able to reply to Sir Charles Wilson—who asked him what had been his intentions—that in his opinion the best thing to be done was either to go at once for Metammeh, or to repeat the plan adopted at Abu-Klea, of going out to fight for the water, and then returning to the seriba to carry the wounded and the stores down the Nile.

There was no time for hesitation. The enemy, including a large number of regular soldiers, was in force directly in front, and lines of banners could also be seen on the left and right, while the firing from the front and the right grew so hot that a company of guards and a company of the mounted infantry were sent out as skirmishers to keep it down; and during the time that the square was being formed the position became almost intolerable. Several of the officers had very narrow escapes. One had the button of his coat carried inside his shirt just above the belt; a bullet whizzed through the whisker of another; a third had his helmet shot through; and the sword scabbard of a fourth was struck, the bullet glancing off to his ankle.

The march could not be commenced until the seriba was left in a condition to resist any attack that might be made upon it, and it was for this reason that the two small redoubts already mentioned were formed under a brisk fire.

The square was formed with the guards and mounted infantry in front and the heavies and Sussex in the rear; half the heavies being left at the seriba with the royal artillery and the naval brigade, their guns and the "Gardner" and all the camels, except those actually required for carrying the ambulance, reserve ammunition, and water. At each angle of the square were small reserves, dismounted hussars and sappers, to meet any repetition of the attempt to rush upon a corner of the square and bear it inward. Adjutant Crutchley, of the guards, was seriously wounded in the leg while the square was forming. The heavy fire of the enemy was, however, replied to from the redoubts, and as each corps came up, it lay down on the ground in proper position; the place chosen for assembling being just outside the hussars, where

the fire was rather less violent. Bullets were flying constantly, however, and the wretched camels tied down within the seriba were slaughtered in scores, though Sir Charles Wilson records that as he went about to see to what was being done he could not help feeling surprised that the poor beasts "showed no alarm and did not seem to mind being hit. One heard a heavy thud, and looking round saw a stream of blood oozing out of the wound, but the camel went on chewing his cud as if nothing had happened, not even giving a slight wince to show he was in pain."

At about half-past two in the afternoon the advance was ordered, and though the men were still weary, most of them hungry, and all suffering from an insufficient supply of water, they rejoiced that they were going forward to meet the enemy and to fight their way to the Nile. The latter consideration was, in fact, an important one; for it was necessary that they should reach the water that night. The situation was very critical: the enemy was working round to the rear, and yet the gravel terrace in front swarmed with footmen and horsemen with their banners before them. Sir Charles Wilson felt how grave the crisis had become, and yet he records that from the moment he entered the square he felt no anxiety as to the result. The men's faces were set in a determined expression that meant business, and he knew that they intended to drink from the Nile that night. They moved in a cool collected way without noise or any appearance of excitement. Many, as he afterwards heard, never expected to get through, but were determined to sell their lives dearly.

In the direction of the river the country was fairly open, and Colonel Boscawen so manœuvred as to keep the square on the bare gravel patches, that the enemy concealed in the long grass and scrub might not make a sudden rush unperceived. Major Verner gave the square its direction and it first moved round the smaller of the two redoubts towards the river; but the men had no sooner risen from the ground than the enemy opened a sharp fire, in which so many of our men were wounded that they were carried back to the seriba only about 30 yards distant, while the square quickened its march, got clear of the redoubt, and made for the

gravel ridge occupied by the great force of the enemy between them and the Nile. It was slow work, for though the bare gravelly ground was better than the savass grass, the camels could only move at a very deliberate pace. Our frequent change of position as the square zigzagged to keep upon these open spaces rather frustrated the tactics of the enemy, who had to shift their position also from the points at those inclosed or grass-covered spaces through which they thought we should pass and where they were prepared to attack. They kept up a continuous and harassing fire, and our men had now and then to lie down and fire volleys at the places from which the puffs of smoke were seen to come from amidst the long grass. Occasionally the shifting of the enemy could be observed from the seriba, where our men were at the guns and contrived to put several shells among them. The march was a terrible one, however, and the number of times that our men were halted to fire at those "hot" places where many were killed or wounded, consumed hours, so that the sun was sinking low when they were still about 600 yards from the ridge. Lord Arthur Somerset was wounded, many men had fallen, for the firing had now become furious, so that the men fell quickly, and the cacolets and stretchers were filled with the wounded. It was an awful time. To go on perhaps meant fighting to the last man; to retreat meant being utterly destroyed. Suddenly from the right front of the square the enemy moved to the left front, the firing ceased, and the spearmen came rushing down the hill with several horsemen before them bearing towards the left-hand corner of the square.

At sight of this a kind of low sigh of relief was uttered by our men, and as they halted to receive the charge they gave a wild cheer, and remembering Abu-Klea, fired as coolly and regularly as they would have done on a field-day at Aldershot. The bugle sounded "cease firing;" the order was obeyed; there were a few seconds of rest, and when, with the enemy at 300 yards, the call to "commence firing" was heard, the advancing host seemed to melt away before the steady and tremendous discharge. The leaders with their fluttering banners went down. Only one

horseman got to within fifty to a hundred yards, and he also fell. In a few minutes the whole of the front ranks were swept away, and then there was a hustling backward; the Arabs, brave as they were, could not stand that deadly fire poured against them with a precision that seemed to make every man a mark for a bullet. At the same time the surrounding hills were left bare of the thousands of Arabs, who, but a few minutes before, seemed to be about to come down and annihilate the little force. Three ringing cheers arose from our men; victory was ours, but the work was not done yet: the Nile must be reached, if possible, before night had set in, and the heavy train of wounded must be borne thither. To men parched, faint, and weary from the excitement of such a day and from previous want of sleep, to march the remaining distance was a terrible task; but it had to be accomplished.

All the leaders of the defeated foe and about 300 dead lay in front of the square, and, as was afterwards discovered, numbers more had been killed in the long grass and behind the ridge, several of their wounded having been taken into Metammeh. Our garrison in the seriba, too, had kept up their duel with the Arab riflemen at long ranges, and had fired at the masses of the enemy on the gravel hills in front of the squares, where the shells could occasionally be seen bursting and scattering the crowds, so that it was surmised that a large number of spearmen were prevented from joining the charge because they were driven from their position. It was said that the whole of the people of the country side, amounting, with the tribesmen engaged in the battle, to more than 15,000, witnessed the engagement, which was afterwards called the battle of Gubat from the place afterwards occupied by our troops, which somehow came to be spoken of as Gubat, though it was really Abu-Kru. When the square mounted the ridge the flying enemy could be seen in all directions. The square had been halted for a few minutes after the fight was over, to refill pouches with ammunition and give the men a drink of water. Not a man had been killed by the charge, nor had one been touched by sword or spear.

The sun had just set as they resumed their march and reached



the top of the ridge, and to their great disappointment they could not see the Nile, which was still at a little distance. There was the line of green vegetation and the clusters of houses forming the villages, one of which was on their route; but night was falling, and it was thought better to avoid a place, where some of the enemy might be in ambush, and to strike the river at once, so a slight detour was made down a shallow ravine, at the end of which was a part of the belt of cultivated fields containing pease, mimosa, and patches of dhurra. Colonel Wilson, Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, and other officers went forward to find a place suitable for encampment, leaving the square at the end of the ravine, and though it was now dark they succeeded. The first consideration was to gain a spot on the bank where men and horses could obtain the priceless luxury of an ample drink of water; and this was, in fact, the first desire of the explorers themselves—an unstinted draught that would alleviate what they felt was almost quenchless thirst. They were soon back, however, and the square reached the river about half an hour after dark, the wounded being taken to the best place that could be found on the bank, the men going down in companies to drink, and the camels being turned into the fields of pease, there to luxuriate in a fresh and juicy meal. It was an excellent position, sheltered by two hills and so protected that a picket and guns could have defended it against any force that the enemy could send; and it was afterwards regretted that a regular position was not established here instead of at Gubat or Abu-Kru, to which the square afterwards moved. As soon as the men had had a good drink the sappers were employed to cut bush to form a seriba, and pickets were posted on each side of the ravine by which the river had been approached. The men, however, were dead beat, and as they went up from their drink at the river, numbers of them simply fell to the ground and were instantly asleep, so that there was some difficulty in rousing them and getting them into their places for the night. They had found water, and luckily that (except rest) was all they seemed for the time to care about, for very few of them had taken any rations or even so much as a mouthful of biscuit. With 150 rounds of

rifle ammunition they fancied they would have enough to carry, and so had left the rations behind.

The first care was for the wounded, of whom there were eighty-six, nineteen men having been killed, and two officers—Quartermaster Lima of the 19th Hussars, and Mr. Jewell of the commissariat. The doctors showed splendid qualities of courage, endurance, and professional experience. This was the fourth night that they had been without sleep, and they had been through two sharp fights, and yet were at work until every wounded man had been attended. One of the surgeons fainted from exhaustion before he would give up. The bearer company had also behaved with the utmost coolness, every wounded man was at once picked up and placed on a *cacelot* on a camel, or upon a stretcher, and removed, making no great outcry, though many were very severely injured and must have suffered great pain.

To have reached the Nile, and an abundant supply of water, was so great a thing that next to, or perhaps before, the opportunity for sleep it was cause for a feeling of thankfulness. There was not a man who had not acted in such a manner as to deserve praise, and though the night was cold just before daybreak, and the rest was short, it was remarkably sweet. Daylight was the signal for everyone to be up and doing, for the next business was to bring down the *seriba* and its occupants, and to establish a camp and hospital on the river bank. Tanks and water-skins had to be filled, for the occupants of the *seriba* had but a limited supply of the thick water brought from Abu-Klea. Scouting parties were sent out to reconnoitre up and down the river. One returned bringing in a black slave, who had at once willingly submitted, and declared that there were no Arabs in the direction whence he had been taken. The other had discovered that a village at a little distance was completely deserted; and Sir Charles Wilson at once moved on with the guards and mounted infantry to occupy it, leaving the heavies under Colonel Talbot to protect the wounded. The village which was quite deserted, was well situated on a terrace of gravel overlooking the Nile at about three-quarters of a mile distance. This was Abu-Kru, which for

some unascertained reason came to be called Gubat. It was soon placed in a condition of defence, and ready to receive the wounded, who were guarded by a hundred men of the heavies under Lord Arthur Somerset, while a detachment of the Sussex under Major Sunderland set out to keep a watch on Metammeh and check any probable advance of the enemy. The remainder of the force prepared to march to the seriba and bring back their comrades, who had been attacked, but not at very close quarters, though crowds of Arabs were still to be seen in various directions, and large numbers of them again assembled on the gravel hill near Metammeh as our men were moving off. But they had not much relish for renewing the fight of the day before, for our men, though they were half-starving and much of their clothing was in a very dilapidated condition, were so fresh after their rest and the plentiful supply of water, that they were evidently ready for battle, and therefore the enemy began to disperse again, their movements being expedited by some volleys from long range, which knocked several of them over, and left the way to the seriba uninterrupted. The garrison in charge there received them with hearty British cheering and many congratulations. Orders were at once given for moving down to the river.

Sir Herbert Stewart was not worse, and hopes were entertained of his recovery; but he had to be moved with care, and there were a large number of badly wounded men, so many that the size of the fort had been increased, and saddles, ammunition and commissariat boxes, and all kinds of materials had been used to form its walls, the number of dead and wounded horses and the still greater number of dead and dying camels making a peculiarly hideous feature of the strange and harrowing scene within that inclosure. For the Arab sharpshooters had kept up their fire on the seriba until the defeat of the men who charged the square from the gravel ridge. Sir Charles Wilson records that the men at the seriba then had a quiet night, but that some of them along with the Arab driving boys from Aden began to loot the stores, and worst of all the brandy and champagne, which were medical stores

intended only for the sick and wounded. There are mostly some black sheep in every regiment, and these wretched brutes, had, perhaps, had their love of plunder fired by observing that the native drivers had contrived to seize upon some of the provisions which were most tempting to hungry and thirsty men. The officers were little, if any, better off than the men, for Sir Charles found that all his own small supply of stores had been taken, his box broken open, and even his ulster stolen. However, there was breakfast to be had, and the men were at work getting together the stores and pulling down the walls of the seriba, composed of the boxes and saddles that were now wanted for the camels and horses. Two journeys had to be made, for there were not enough camels left alive or strong enough to carry all the stores at once, so an extra guard remained at the small redoubt. One duty was the burial of the dead, among them Cameron and Herbert, lately so full of life and promise. The service was read by Lord C. Beresford, and Sir Charles Wilson himself attended as chief mourner. The dead lying on the field of the previous day's battle were also buried by a party under command of Poë of the marines, and there also the colonel in command was present to see whether the corpses had been disfigured, and if any men had probably been left there alive; but the nature of the bullet wounds showed that death must have been immediate, and though the bodies had been stripped only three of them had been much slashed with swords or stabbed with spears. There were still above 200 dead bodies of the Arabs lying there, some of them fine men from Kordofan, others black soldiers, and others of the Jalin tribe, but all with the Madhi's uniform and a string of ninety-nine beads round the neck. Two or three who were only wounded, and were therefore taken on with the column, said that Omdurman had fallen, that Feki Mustapha was on his way from Khartûm in command of a large force to give battle to our men, and that another force was coming up the river from Berber.

Before nightfall the slowly-marching column had reached Abu-Kru and were all settled down and under shelter; the men who had occupied the village had converted it into a strong post,

and though many of the rush huts and roofs had been burned to clear the ground, and thus much useful shelter for the sick and wounded destroyed, the troops were soon in position, the village in the centre occupied by the Sussex Regiment, the wounded, and the commissariat, the camels and hussars between the village and the river, the guards in front, the heavies on the left, and the mounted infantry on the right.

The position was secure, and rest and food were absolutely necessary, for in effect the men had been on arduous duty from the evening of the 16th to this, the night of the 20th, and on the 19th the square which marched to the Nile had been for nearly nine hours under fire and had engaged in a severe fight though not at close quarters. For the whole four days they had been making great exertions under a tropical sun, with little food and insufficient water, and scarcely any rest. More than a tenth of their entire number had been killed or wounded, and yet when they bivouacked at Abu-Kru (all but the garrison left at the small post) they were full of go and spirit, for they had been victorious; and though they needed rest, and no reinforcements would be sent till they were able to send a message to Lord Wolseley at Korti, they looked forward with a kind of alacrity to the moment when they would attack the enemy at Metammeh, for before this was done no such message would be sent.

The camels had been without water for six or seven days, and had been kept to about a third of their usual allowance of food, and for some part of the time were so tied down that they probably got nothing for about thirty-seven hours on one occasion and four-and-twenty hours on another; while their work was continuous and exhausting when they were laden and on the march. The hussars' horses were equally used up, and were past doing duty as cavalry, and this and the fact of there being a hundred wounded men in hospital, had much to do with the question whether a portion of the original programme of the expedition should or could be carried out by an attack on Metammeh. Sir Charles Wilson thought that the attempt should be made, because of the political effect that might be produced by apparent

inability to capture the place. It was thought that if the assault were made at once, before the arrival of reinforcements to the enemy, possession might be gained, and therefore it was determined to attack a large government building, which it was believed stood at the north side of the town near the centre; by seizing which our troops might establish themselves in the town. The attempt would be doubtful and dangerous, for the resistance that might be made was not to be estimated, and there was the probability of continued street-fighting, which to a small force like ours would be very serious. It was decided that, at all events, some operations should be attempted, and that an attack should be commenced next day (January 21st) as soon after daybreak as possible.

A brief night's rest after all, and even that interrupted by an alarm of fire, because of the ignition of the dry thatch of one of the houses. The men were on parade when the first speck of dawn was seen in the sky. The town was to be reconnoitred, and Major Barrow started first with his hussars, and one of the slaves who had been picked up was to be sent into the village near the town with a letter calling on the people to surrender, and promising that if they did so they should not be molested. The advance of the troops was in double column, with the guns, camels with ammunition, ambulance, and water between the two columns, the force consisting of guards, heavies, mounted infantry, naval brigade with Gardner guns, royal artillery with guns, the royal engineers, and the bearer company.

Lieutenant Douglas Dawson, in his account, says, that the natural way to advance on Metammeh was with the right resting on the river, and for our men to occupy successively the three villages in between them and the town. However, owing to the position in the town of certain important buildings, it was deemed necessary to advance on the place from the north. This gave three disadvantages—it exposed our right flank; it left uncovered our base at Gubat, and it brought us to the town on the flank where the Abu-Klea route entered it, consequently where they (the enemy) would probably be intrenched. So we turned again for the river and occupied the next village, but owing to our

being obliged to show on the high ground we had prepared the whole town for what we were going to do. On nearing it we found the town full of people, and it proved to be strongly held. The natives could be seen bolting in hundreds at the east end, but evidently the walls were manned by the fighting men. From loopholed walls we sustained a well-aimed fire and could practically touch nobody. Our two guns came into action, but did little harm, as common shell goes through these mud walls but only makes a hole where it passes, and with this mud material nothing breaks or catches fire. When close to the town a large force of spears and flags were seen, and we advanced slowly in square hoping to get these to attack. When 600 or 700 yards from the walls, as they would not charge, and our force was too small and too much encumbered already with wounded to attack walls manned by rifles, which would lead to hours of street-fighting, and we could see what a size the town was (being too big for our force to hold, it would rather be a source of danger than otherwise had we taken it), it was decided to retire. No sooner had we taken one step backwards than a round shot was fired at the square and passed over us. Three shells, however, got our range, and the third came plump in the middle. We now deployed and slowly retired, covered by skirmishers and artillery."

While the attack was being made on the town, at about half-past nine in the morning an orderly came from Major Barrow to report that some large flags had been seen in the rear and that they were believed to be those of steamers. This was news, indeed, and Mr. Burleigh of the *Daily Telegraph*, who had been actively employed all the time, rode off to see what they were like. There could be little doubt that they were the steamers promised by Gordon, and Sir Charles Wilson sent Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley to confer with those on board and to induce the commander to land some of the soldiers and help our men in the attack on Metammeh.

They were nothing loth, and the delight of our men at sight of the steamers coming stately down the river with the Egyptian flags flying was justified by the alacrity with which the black

soldiers landed with their guns. The Egyptian commanders Khashm-el-Mus and Abd-ul-Hamid remained on board with their fellaheen, and perhaps so much the better, as Gordon had always declared that those "hens" the Egyptians were useless; but the blacks were as brisk and lively as great boys, and were received with welcome shouts by our fellows. They were sent to the front with their four guns, which they ran into action at once, making some first-rate practice on the town or the village at the end of it, and standing to it though their fire brought a hail of rifle bullets their way. "It seemed extraordinary," says Lieutenant Dawson, "what good troops the master mind of Gordon had made out of such rough material. Never have I seen men so pleased as they were at meeting us. Gordon's name mentioned was like that of a god whom they worshipped. It was even difficult to persuade these enthusiastic allies to retire, as we explained to them that we did not intend for the present to attack the town."

While these new allies were firing from behind the houses and some rising ground, Sir Charles Wilson was conferring with Khashm-el-Mus and Abd-ul-Hamid, and it was then that he saw Gordon's note—"Khartûm all right—can hold out for years"—a note which most people now agree was intended to be regarded only as a feint and designed for the enemy, while the previous messages had said that he had only enough provisions for forty days,—a period already several days past. The message "can hold out for years" was written on the 29th of December, and the previous message that provisions would last but for forty days had been written on the 4th of November: "we can hold out forty days with ease; after that it will be difficult." It was not precisely what may be called a life-or-death message so far as a few days, say a week, over the forty days might be concerned; but here was now the 22nd of January, and it would be perhaps another week before Sir Charles Wilson would be able to get to Khartûm, if even, under the adverse circumstances of the situation, he ever got into the city at all. The letter was for ~~the~~ the enemy; but the enemy was now holding the inhabitants of Khartûm as men surround game in a pit, apparently waiting only for some inciting cause or,



perhaps, some superstitious occasion for closing around them and capturing or putting them to death.

Khashm-el-Mus reported that as they came down the river they had seen the force under Faki Mustafa coming from Khartûm, and thus that it would be at Gubat either that evening or on the following day.

What was to be done? The question was one not easily answered even after a serious conference, in which Sir Herbert Stewart, though too badly wounded to take the slightest personal part, was able to add his advice and opinion. It was too evident that if a large force was really coming down it would be next to impossible to continue firing into the pliable mud walls of Metammeh ammunition which would be wanted for a fight with the approaching enemy, and there were scarcely sufficient men in the camp to protect the hundred wounded, though these and the detachment at the redoubt three miles away, were the only troops not now in action. To have attempted to carry Metammeh would have been a great risk, for it was too large for our men to have held it: the mud houses must have been destroyed, and during the time that this was being done the enemy from without might have overwhelmed us in detail. After further consultation with Boscawen it was reluctantly decided to retire on the camp without attacking the town; and the movement was admirably executed, though before it commenced, one good man and true,—Poë, the officer of marines,—was terribly wounded, and was obliged to undergo amputation almost at the hip. He wore a red coat, and was standing up alone on open ground, talking to his men, who were lying down, and so it was supposed that his conspicuous figure drew the fire of the enemy.

The enemy would not come out to fight, though during the withdrawal of the column every opportunity was given for their doing so; but it was to be feared that the retirement of our force had a bad effect, as it was evident that an attack on the town had been intended and withdrawal was an acknowledgment of weakness. Sir Charles Wilson thought it would have been possible to take Metammeh if our force had gone at it at once instead of marching

round it to the south; but it would have been with the loss of 50 or 60 men, and it must be remembered that the column had already been much reduced, and we had, at all events, established a position on the Nile. The houses and villages which lay between the camp and Metammeh were burned, to prevent their being occupied by the enemy, and in accordance with the opinion of Sir Herbert Stewart the wounded were moved down to the river, where they were placed under canvas.

The four steamers which had come down from Gordon were the *Talahawiyeh*, commanded by Nashi Pasha; the *Bordein*, by Abd-ul-Hamid Bey; *Es Safia*, by Mahmud Bey; and the *Tewfikiyeh*, by Khashm-el-Mus Bey. They had been fired at on their voyage, and the *Bordein* had been hulled by shot. The *Tewfikiyeh* was quite a little steamer, and into this Sir Herbert Stewart was afterwards moved just before Sir Charles Wilson made the start for Khartûm. The first thing to be done after the return of the column and the removal of the wounded was to prepare at once for the next step in the enterprise, and Sir Charles Wilson had now in his hands the letters which Gordon had sent down at various times; two of them being addressed to the officer commanding her Majesty's troops, and dated in October, when he first sent the steamers, expecting the arrival of the column at Metammeh. He had on the 19th of October written in his journal:—"I hope it will be remembered that with respect to white troops (fellaheen) on board the now four steamers at Metemma, I make you a handsome present of them (officers and all), and request that if you use the steamers you will disembark those men and take them on your list, for we never wish to see them (and to have to feed them) up here again. *You will be carrying out the evacuation policy!!!* If you do not use the steamers, please send them back *empty of these fellaheen troops*, but *send me their rifles*. You will soon have a fine contingent? for I have everything ready for a *general discharge of Cairo débbris* (Bashi-Bazouks, &c. &c.) the moment I hear you are really at Berber. I shall not wait to ask your leave, for I have had enough of the *débbris* up here, and you can feed them better than we can; *at anyrate they will be off*

*my hands and on yours.* I hope it will be an understood thing that every Egyptian soldier you find *belongs to you*, and that you will not send him back to me. I nobly present you *with them all*; and then, besides that, you have the glory of living representatives of your rescuing expedition. . . . I am sending down the *Bordeen* and *Talatween* the day after to-morrow to Shendy, with orders to leave one steamer at Shendy, and go on with the other four to Berber, and to remain in its neighbourhood. The *Mansowrah* will stay at Shendy, and the *Talatween*, *Bordeen*, *Saphia*, and *Towfikia* will go towards Berber. I shall keep *Ismailia* and *Husseinyeh* here."

This will show the amazing energy of Gordon. The steamers were cruising on the Nile ready to meet and to aid the troops when they should arrive; but those troops were months behind the time at which he had expected them. On the 19th of October, 1884, he had in Khartûm 2316 black troops, regulars, 1421 white troops, 1906 Cairo Bashi-Bazouks, 2330 Shaggiyeh, 692 townspeople enrolled; a total of 8665 more or less fighting men; but the white troops and Bashi-Bazouks were, as we have seen, to be got rid of as soon as possible; to "be sent to Berber as soon as it is possible to find transport, and as soon as you get to Berber." He had 12 guns upon lines, 11 steamers, 21,141 rounds of gun ammunition, 2,165,000 rounds of Remington small-arms ammunition, and a weekly turn-out of 40,000 rounds from the arsenal. In the magazine were 4018 ardebs of grain, 349,000 okes of biscuit. The consumption by the troops was 500 ardebs a week. There were 7 steamers, 58 private boats, 53 government boats, and the money in hand amounted to £2900 in specie and £39,195 in paper. An entry in the journal, October 20, ends by deploring the loss of the *Abbas* and the *Fascher*, and saying, "What one has felt so much here is the want of men like Gessi, or Messodaglia, or Slatin, but I have no one to whom I could intrust expeditions like that. . . . I have prepared to clear out of the palace and have five houses ready for occupation. I hope Cuzzi's baggage will be searched, for I feel sure he is a traitor. A slave came in this evening from Waled-a-goun with the usual story of the near

approach of the Mahdi; that Arabs want food; that regulars mean to desert when they get an opportunity. With the reiterated request that I may not have any *Egyptians, Turks, or Circassians sent back to me*, I end this journal." Then comes the signature, the date (Oct 20), and a line saying "the sunset to-night ends the year 1301 and begins 1302."

Other journals, or rather separate volumes of the journal, from the 10th of September (the date of the departure of Stewart, Herbin, and Power from Khartûm for Dongola *via* Berber) to the 30th of September had been sent by steamer for Berber *via* Shendy, addressed "to Lieut.-col. Stewart, C.M.G., or chief of the staff, Lord Wolseley, C.B." A third, to the 12th of October, similarly addressed, was sent by the *Tewfikiyeh* to Metammeh. A fourth to the 20th of October, to Shendy in a steamer; and the fifth and sixth from 20th of October to 5th of November, and from 5th of November to 14th December, addressed to "chief of the staff of the expeditionary staff for the relief of the garrison," left in the *Bordein* for Metammeh on the 5th of November and the 15th of December. These journals were now (22d of January, 1885) handed over to Sir Charles Wilson by the officer commanding the steamer. The last letters had been forwarded by the same steamer, and, with the last volume of the journal, had been intrusted to a Greek.

The entries in the later books were growing more and more significant. On October 22d a letter from the Mahdi reached Gordon professing to relate how he had captured the *Abbas* steamer and the post. Gordon replied that he did not care who had surrendered nor who had been captured. He did not, in fact, believe in the capture of the *Abbas*, and was under the impression that the papers and letters, a long list of which the Mahdi sent to him, declaring them to have been seized, were not in the *Abbas* at all, but were taken from a spy whom he had sent out from Khartûm, the same man who had brought him the news from Dongola of the British advance. This man, he said, had been caught at Metammeh and killed, having, when drunk, let out that he came from Gordon.

The Mahdi's letter, at all events, showed that a large number

of letters, telegrams, maps, and ciphers had fallen into his hands, and that he was, therefore, pretty well acquainted with the whole situation, with all that Gordon had done and asked for, and with much of his correspondence with the khedive, Nubar Pasha, and the English consul-general at Cairo. The letter commenced:

“ In the name of God the merciful and compassionate; praise be to God the bountiful Ruler, and blessing on our Lord Mahomet with peace.

From the servant who trusts in God—Mahomed the son of Abdallah.

To Gordon Pasha of Khartûm, may God guide him into the path of virtue. Amen.

Know that your small steamer, named *Abbas*, which you sent with the intention of forwarding your news to Cairo by the way of Dongola, the persons sent being your representatives Stewart Pasha and the two consuls, French and English, with other persons, has been captured by the will of God.

Those who believed in us as the Mahdi,<sup>1</sup> and surrendered, have been delivered, and those who did not were destroyed—as your representative aforementioned, with the consuls and the rest—whose souls God has condemned to the fire and to eternal misery. That steamer and all that was in it has fallen a prey to the Moslems, and we have taken knowledge of all the letters and telegrams which were in it, in Arabic and in Turkish (languages), and in the maps which were opened (explained) to us by those on whom God has bestowed his gifts and has enlightened their hearts by faith, and the benefits of willing submission. Also (we have found therein) the letters sent from you to the Mudir of Dongola with the (letters, &c.) accompanying, to be forwarded to Egypt and to European countries. All has been seized and the contents are known. It should all have been returned to thee, not being wanted here; but as it was originally sent from you, and is known unto you, we prefer to send you part of the contents and mention the property therein, so that you may be certified; and in order that the truth may make a lasting impression on thy mind, in the

<sup>1</sup> The name *Mahdi* is said literally to signify guide.

hope that God may guide thee to the faith of Islam, and to surrender; that you and your followers may surrender to Him and to us, that so you and they may obtain everlasting good and happiness." Then follows a precise list of the papers, &c., said to have been seized, and certainly containing much of the information sent by Gordon as to his position and strength at Khartûm, and the reproaches and appeals made for aid in order to carry out his mission. The letter winds up with a declaration that reliance on expected reinforcements will be useless, and offering that if Gordon will turn Moslem and surrender with those who are with him at Khartûm, that he shall have a safe-conduct and blessings in this world and the next. The Mahdi said that he was then a day's journey from Omdurman and was coming to Khartûm; and in a special postscript referring to a cipher telegram of Gordon's that the troops in the Bahr Gazelle, the Equator, and elsewhere numbered 30,000 soldiers, declared the Bahr Gazelle and the Equator were in his (the Mahdi's) hand, and that they and their chief and all their officers were among his auxiliaries. Two letters purporting to be from the Mahdi's lieutenants in those parts were inclosed in proof of this assertion, and one of them represented that Emir Abdullah (Lupton Bey) had turned Moslem and surrendered.

It had been sufficiently proved that the Mahdi was an unscrupulous liar, and Gordon was indisposed to give more weight to his letter than properly belonged to it; but there could be no doubt that papers, letters, and telegrams had been intercepted. "As for these letters," he wrote of the inclosures referring to Lupton Bey's surrender, &c., "I cannot make head or tail of them, so I leave them to the Arabic scholars of the universities."

Gordon did not hesitate for a moment what reply to send. He at once telegraphed in Arabic to Ferratch Ullah Bey, commandant of Omdurman:—

"Sheikh Mahomed Achmet has sent us a letter to inform us that Lupton Bey, Mudir of Bahr-Gazelle, has surrendered to him, and that the small steamer, in which was Stewart Pasha, has been captured by him, together with what was therein. And he

demands that we should surrender to him. But to me it is all one whether Lupton Bey has surrendered or has not surrendered. And whether he has captured twenty thousand steamers like the *Abbas*, or twenty thousand (officers) like Stewart Pasha (or not); it is all one to me.

I am here like iron, and hope to see the newly-arrived English; and if Mahomed Achmet says that the English die, it is all the same to me. And you must take a copy of this and give it to the messenger from Slatin, and send him out early in the morning that he may go to him. It is impossible for me to have any more words with Mahomed Achmet, only lead; and if Mahomed Achmet is willing to fight, he had better, instead of going to Omdurman, go to the White Nile by the moat. And after this the messengers whom he wants to send to us must not come by the Omdurman; they had better come by the moat before mentioned. And send a literal copy of this according to orders (when it has been sealed by you), by the emissary of Slatin Bey to be delivered, and explain to him that this is by our order."

A bold, determined answer. Gordon would have sent no other even had things appeared worse—if that had been possible. Affairs were bad enough, and the people he had to deal with, the soldiers and servants, were, as he said, enough to break anyone's heart. "If these Arabs (one's servants) are not *eating*, they are *saying* their *prayers*; if not saying their prayers, they are *sleeping*; if not sleeping, they *are sick*. One snatches at them at intervals. Now figure to yourself the position: you cannot do anything with them, while in the fortresses, *eating*, *saying prayers*, *sleeping*, or *sick*, and they know it. You would be a brute if you did (which I fear I often am). You want to send an immediate order; and there is your servant bobbing up and down, and you cannot disturb him. It is a beautiful country for trying experiments with your patience. It is very curious that if I am in a bad temper, which I fear is often the case, my servants will be always at their prayers; and thus religious practices follow the scale of my temper; they are pagans if all goes well."

It need scarcely be said that these journals at Khartûm

contain numerous touches of that dry satirical humour which we have before noted as interspersing the former diaries. The space remaining to us will not admit many extracts, and the journals, that is to say, a judiciously revised copy of them, have been published, omitting, no doubt, some strong references to diplomatists and others in authority, of whom there is still enough said to indicate what the writer thought. Gordon had inscribed on the journals themselves, that if they were published they would want "paring," and the "pared" edition has been for some time before the public.

On the 3d of November he was still uncertified of the loss of the *Abbas* and the murder of those on board, when he received a letter which Major Kitchener had written at Debbah on the 16th of October, and sent by messenger, saying, "Please inform me by this present messenger, who is paid to return, who were on board the steamer that came down from Khartûm. I am sorry to say that whoever they were they have fallen into the hands of Suleiman Wady Goun Sheikh of the Minassir, and have, I am afraid, been killed. Lord Wolseley is now at Wady Halfa, and it is expected that this expedition will definitely start from Dongola on or about the 1st of November. Special boats are coming out from England for the passage up the Nile."

It was a great blow to Gordon to hear of the fate of the steamer and of his friends, and he was growing heart-sick. He had on the 24th of October calculated that the advance force of troops had arrived at Wady Halfa on September 22d, that they took twenty days from there to Debbah, so that they were at Debbah on the 12th of October, and could not arrive at Metammeh (Shendy) before the 10th of November, nine days for 150 miles, and five days in a steamer to Khartûm, so that the 15th of November ought to see them or their advance guard at that destination. "If they do not come before the 30th of November, the game is up, and Rule Britannia. In this calculation I have given every latitude for difficulties of transport, making forts, &c., and on the 15th of November I ought to see her majesty's uniform. . . . I suppose a part of the force will go to attack Berber on the 10th



of November (then I calculate they will be at Metammeh—Shendy), and that a small party will come on here; so we have now 7 days in October and 15 days in November to wait = 22 days—three weeks to add to the 226 days we have already passed, owing to Baring (who I shall remember) and his peace manœuvres. One of the papers Slatin sent to me says that Graham was willing to send them to Berber and could have done it, but Evelyn would not give the order. I asked only for 200 men to be sent there (vide my telegram in Stewart's journal).<sup>1</sup>

"I dwell in the joy of never seeing Great Britain again, with its horrid wearisome *dinner* parties and miseries. How we can put up with those things passes my imagination! It is a perfect bondage. At those dinner parties we are all in masks, saying what we do not believe, eating and drinking things we do not want, and then abusing one another. I would sooner live like a dervish with the Mahdi, than go out to dinner every night in London. I hope if any English general comes to Khartûm, he will not ask me to dinner. Why men cannot be friends without bringing the wretched stomach in is astounding."

It must be remembered that the journals in which these entries occur were composed of a narrative of events at Khartûm, expressions of opinion, comments on the situation, and emphatic declarations of the best way to deal with it. They were addressed to the officer in command, and their delivery had been long delayed. It was the difficulty of communication, the interception of messages, the block of telegrams, that caused much of the misunderstanding. Gordon in Khartûm conceived that he was abandoned, neglected, ignored; those who were anxious to aid him, getting only some out of several messages, thought them ambiguous, or wrongly interpreted such as reached them; and the result was that there had been fatal delay at the commencement of the enterprise, and then an attempt which, because of the small force at disposal, could only have completely succeeded if it had been made immediately on receiving Gordon's appeal, before the enemy had begun

<sup>1</sup> Stewart had kept an exact and elaborate journal which he took with him on board the ill-fated *Abbas*, and it was not recovered.

to close upon Omdurman, or could discover our intention and swarm to Metammeh to frustrate it.

On the 4th of November Gordon wrote, "I looked upon the descent of the *Abbas* as a certainty. I looked upon the relief of Khartûm as most uncertain; hence I sent down the cipher books of the foreign office." The loss of the steamer and those on board was a great sorrow to him; but as he said, with his views (about life and death) he could not say that the death of Stewart and Power was an evil. He had sent down with them not only Stewart's journal and the cipher, but every paper and document in his possession except a firman from the khedive, received in January, 1884, respecting the withdrawal of the people and the troops and the virtual abandonment of the Soudan, giving back independence to the ancient families of the kings of the Soudan regions. This firman Gordon did not promulgate, but issued instead a notice that he would hold Khartûm, and that aid was coming by which the siege might be raised. Gordon had all along declared that nothing should induce him to desert the people at Khartûm who had trusted him, and in effect he says in his journal on the 9th of November, 1884: "If the expeditionary force has come for me alone I will not return with it; it may go back, while I will remain here as governor-general and make the best use I can of the war material which belongs to me while I hold that position. If I am removed from that position by a firman from the khedive, I will still remain here in a private capacity and devote my life and energy to those people who have devoted their lives to me." The firman virtually proclaiming the abandonment of the Soudan he retained, as, if the Mahdi had got hold of it he would have crowed over it, while if he took Khartûm and found it with Gordon, he might say, "Why, you had the order from Tewfik to give up the country and you did not;" but before he could say so, or obtain the documents, he must take the town, and before the town would be taken Gordon would be killed.

December the 13th and no signs of the expedition. "To-day is the 276th day of our anxiety," writes Gordon. "We are going to send down the *Bordcen* the day after to-morrow, and with her

I shall send this journal. *If some effort is not made before ten days' time the town will fall.* It is inexplicable this delay. If the expeditionary forces have reached the river and met my steamers, one hundred men are all that we require, just to show themselves. I send this journal, for I have little hopes of saving it if the town falls. I put in the sort of arrangement I would make with Zubair Pasha for the future government of the Soudan."

On the following day, December 14th,—“Arabs fired two shells at the palace this morning; 546 ardebs dhoora in store; also 83,525 okes of biscuit! 10.30 a.m. the steamers are down at Omdurman engaging the Arabs; consequently I am on *tentc-hooks!* 11.30 a.m. steamers returned; the *Bordeen* was struck by a shell in her battery; we had only one man wounded. We are going to send down the *Bordeen* to-morrow with this journal. If I was in command of the two hundred men of the expeditionary force, which are all that are necessary for the movement, I should stop just below Halfeyeh, and attack the Arabs at that place before I came on here to Khartûm. I should then communicate with the north fort and act according to circumstances. Now, MARK THIS, if the expeditionary force, and I ask for no more than two hundred men, does not come in ten days the town may fall; and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye!

You send me no information though you have lots of money."

This, then, was the information in the volume of the journal, the latest entry in which was the 14th of December, 1884, and it had just reached Sir Charles Wilson's hands at Gubat on the 22d of January, 1885. The *letters* which Sir Charles Wilson first opened were dated October 24th, and were addressed to the officer commanding H. M. troops. One was an order to Nashi Pasha, the Egyptian commanding the four steamers, to give them over to the English. The other was as follows: "I have sent the steamers *Saphia*, *Mansourah*, *Bordeen*, *Talataween*, *Tewfikia*, down towards Berber to aid you. On board these steamers are officers and men of Egyptian army. I request:—1. You will take charge of the steamers (though I would not recommend you to change the captains, the *reis* or steersmen, or the crews). 2. That you will

take out of these steamers all Egyptian officers and soldiers. I make you a present of these *hens*, and request you will not let one come back here to me. I include in this all prescribed ranks, pashas, beys, &c. &c. 3. I request *you* will take charge of these steamers and not allow any nominee of Tewfik Pasha to interfere with you in this matter. The officers and soldiers of Egypt have been paid, or their pay has been regulated, so you will have no difficulty on that score. If you do not use the steamers at least take out the *hens*, and send them back empty. You will find that the steamers are well supplied with ammunition, &c. If you please to put black troops on board they will be welcome; but not those heroes of Tel-el-Kebir." This and other letters of the same date were, of course, written when he first sent the steamers down to await the arrival of the troops. There were two letters to Lord Wolseley with some scanty news, and one, the latest of all, addressed to Colonel Watson, dated 14th December, in which Gordon said he expected a crisis within the next ten days, or about Christmas-day. He had evidently given up all hope of help from outside, and asked Watson to say good-bye to his friends and relations. This agreed with the letter of November 4th, in which he said the provisions would about hold out to the middle of December. The small note, which had been dated 29th of December, though it said "All right, can hold out for years," meant little in the light of these official communications; but there appeared to be at least one gleam of hope in it,—Khartûm had not been taken. The attack had been deferred, and this was confirmed by the commanders of the steamers. On the 19th of January the town was still holding out. There was a possibility that the pressure upon it would be relieved by the number of men removed to go down to fight at Metammeh, and news of the victories at Abu-Klea and Gubat might have been carried into Khartûm and given fresh determination to Gordon and the garrison.

It had become a serious question whether even a modification of the original plan for relieving Gordon at Khartûm could be carried out. By that programme it had been settled that Sir

Herbert Stewart should occupy Metammeh; but Sir Herbert Stewart was dangerously and, as it afterwards turned out, fatally wounded, and was kept on board the small steamer, where he occupied the roomy stern cabin. Sir Charles Beresford was to command the naval brigade which would man the steamers conveying Sir Charles Wilson to Khartûm with a small escort of troops; but Sir Charles Beresford was so ill that he could not walk without help, and all the officers of the naval brigade were either killed or wounded: Wilson was to leave Colonel Burnaby in command, and Burnaby had been killed at Abu-Klea. More than a tenth of the force had been lost, and there were about 100 wounded who were not only unable to fight, but who had to be protected; provisions would soon be wanted, and when the camels were able to travel they must be sent to fetch them: the horses were useless except for reconnoitring at short distances, and it was reported that the enemy's forces were advancing both from the north and the south.

Sir Charles Wilson, however, announced his intention of going to Khartûm, so handing over the executive command to Boscawen, he prepared to go down the river the next morning (the morning after reading Gordon's letters) for the purpose of seeing whether any force was coming up from Berber, for he considered it to be important to discover whether the comparatively small camp at Abu-Kru was likely to be attacked, and a body of the enemy was reported to be at Sayal below Metammeh. All Gordon's journals and letters were sent on board the steamers for safety, and it was arranged that Major Barrow's hussars should reconnoitre as far as they could go up the river, and that if they reported that they could see nothing of the force under Feki Mustafa's command, Sir Charles Wilson would at once go down the river with two steamers and two companies of the mounted infantry and reconnoitre in that direction for the rest of the day.

It now became a question how to send despatches to Lord Wolseley, for though Captain Pigott of the mounted infantry was selected for the duty of carrying them, there was not a horse that could go so far, the camels were in no better state for a quick

journey to Abu-Klea, and the guides had not the courage to accompany him. He therefore had to wait till a convoy started on the following evening, and to ride with it to Abu-Klea, after which he was to push on alone to Korti. It was known afterwards that he lost his way after parting from the convoy which reached Gakdul before him; but he took up the route there and rode without a moment's loss of time, so that he reached Korti early on the morning of the 28th, and the commander and the forces at Korti then learned the latest news of the now weakened if not crippled desert column, of the departure of Sir Charles Wilson to Khartûm in two steamers with a detachment of the Royal Sussex Regiment, and of the starting of the convoy for Gakdul under Colonel Talbot, who would return to Gubat on the 28th, the date of Captain Pigott's arrival at Khartûm.

It was then determined that on the following day (the 29th January) Sir Redvers Buller should start from Korti on a march across the desert with the Royal Irish Regiment, followed by the Royal West Kent.

All this was of course telegraphed to Cairo to Sir Evelyn Baring by Lord Wolseley, who said:—"There has been sharp fighting since the action of the 17th instant, and the men have had extremely hard work and, until the 23d instant, little sleep. General Stewart, who, I deeply regret, has been severely wounded, has carried out my instructions. We now hold a strongly-fortified post half-way between Berber and Khartûm, and we hold the desert route between it and this place.

On the large island opposite Gubat there is plenty of green forage for horses and camels. Gubat can be held against any force which the Mahdi can send to attack it.

Four steamers from Khartûm under Nusri Pasha arrived at Gubat during a reconnaissance made upon Metammeh on the 21st inst., and the *Pasha* landed some men and guns and took part in the operations.

Sir C. Wilson left for Khartûm on the 24th inst. with two steamers and a detachment of the Royal Sussex Regiment. Metammeh is occupied by about 2000 men, half of them regulars,

under Nur Angar, who has three Krupp guns, but very little ammunition for them. None of the shells fired from them exploded. At Shendy there is one Krupp gun and a small garrison."

Then followed the account of the operations after Abu-Klea with the reconnaissance of Metammeh and the reason for not attacking it with the almost certainty of a further loss of men; and then—"I most deeply deplore the losses which we have experienced, but in every other respect the results of these operations, so ably and successfully conducted by Sir Herbert Stewart, are most satisfactory, and cannot fail to have great effect upon the future of this campaign.

I have had no letters of any importance from General Gordon. The most recent, dated December 29, contains merely one line, saying 'Khartûm all right—could hold out for years.'

Sir R. Buller starts to-morrow to assume command along the desert route to Gubat. We have plenty of troops, of ammunition, and of food. The Royal Irish Regiment begin their movement across the desert to-day, and the Royal West Kent Regiment will follow.

Sir Herbert Stewart writes in good spirits from on board one of the steamers, and the last report of him says he is doing well; but his wound is very severe, and I cannot expect him to be fit for any more work in this campaign.

The temporary deprivation of his services at this moment I regard as a national loss. He is one of the ablest soldiers and most dashing commanders that I have ever known. I recommend him most strongly to the Queen for her Majesty's most favourable consideration."

Then followed a list of the killed and wounded, and the intimation that the wounded at Abu-Klea were doing well and would soon be fetched in to Korti.

These telegrams, which narrated the actual occurrences, did not carry with them to the public, nor even to those who had more particular knowledge of the campaign, the full impression of how serious the situation really was, nor, it must be said, did the commander, and those who acted under him, appear to realize the

probability that the object of the expedition would not be achieved, and that the forces sent by desert and river would not only fail to advance to Khartûm, but would have great difficulty in retiring from the approach to it without being shattered and reduced to a remnant which would not suffice to carry back the tidings of disaster.

Comments in the press were full of encouragement; there was a faint jubilation among the people, who had been waiting anxiously for news. At last, it was thought, Wolseley and Gordon will join hands at Khartûm.

“ Briefly, then,” said the leading journal, “ the present situation is as follows. The position at Gubat, close to the Nile, is held by a force about 900 strong, and Metammeh, two miles to the north, is still occupied by the enemy, estimated at 2000 strong with three guns, but evidently discouraged by two successive defeats. Two of General Gordon’s steamers are probably lying off Metammeh, and the two others may be expected to return from Khartûm to-day or to-morrow. The force at Abu-Klea is safe, and has apparently not been attacked. The desert between Abu-Klea and Gakdul does not seem to be unsafe. The Royal Irish Regiment will leave Korti to-day for the front, and will be followed shortly by the West Kent. These two regiments would add about 1000 men to the force at Gubat; and Metammeh, if not previously abandoned, could be taken without difficulty. More than 3000 camels were probably sent with Sir H. Stewart’s force, and Lord Wolseley has not, perhaps, as many as 1000 available at Korti and Gakdul. It may, therefore, be necessary to march the men across the desert, using the camels only to carry water and provisions. Such a march would probably require a fortnight; but, on the other hand, as soon as the position at the front clears a little an effort will at once be made to send back a large body of camels to Gakdul. It may now be taken as certain that Lord Wolseley has obtained a complete military hold over the Korti-Gubat line, and that the difficulty of communications along it will be due only to want of transport. Almost more important, however, is the presence of the steamers on the Nile, which Lord Wolseley owes



to General Gordon's unrivalled achievement. These steamers are probably capable of conveying about 200 men each, and from Metammeh Lord Wolseley will be able to reach Berber in two days, to clear the river banks of the enemy, to meet General Earle's boats when they surmount the fifth cataract, and, if necessary, to tow them up to Khartûm. Thus the power which these steamers confer will modify all the future operations of the campaign. Hard work, and perhaps hard fighting, still lies before the relief expedition. But the crisis of the campaign has passed, and with the establishment of the British force at Gubat and the opening of communication with Khartûm the operations enter on a new phase. This crisis has been sharp, and it has cost the country many valuable and valued lives; but the brave men who have met a fate few Englishmen dread and some covet have not died in vain, since they have won for their comrades a position which admits of no doubt, and they have definitely lessened the difficulties which bar the way to the relief of Khartûm."

A Reuter's telegram from Gubat was also published on the 28th recounting the action at that place and the subsequent operations, and ending by saying: "On the 22d Sir Charles Wilson, with four of General Gordon's steamers, a number of black troops, two companies of mounted infantry, and six guns, bombarded Shendy for two hours, destroying the town almost completely. The occupants were few in number, and showed unwillingness to surrender. The steamers subsequently returned here without landing any of the troops. A number of forts are being erected here. The Mahdi is stated to have 6000 men near Khartûm.

General Stewart and the remainder of the wounded are doing well.

The population of Khartûm is now stated to be 14,000.

A convoy left on the evening of the 22d to bring stores and ammunition from Gakdul.

The inhabitants of Metammeh appear to remain hidden, few of them being seen by the scouts."

This mention of the bombarding of Shendy and the return of the steamers of course refers to the reconnaissance made by Sir

Charles Wilson previous to his departure for Khartûm, after being assured that the force at Gubat was in no great danger of being attacked.

For this reconnaissance three steamers were got ready on the 22d, and Colonel Wilson went on board the *Talahawiyeh* accompanied by Sir Charles Beresford, who had to be half carried to the cabin in which he was placed on a seat.

In accordance with the advice in Gordon's letter Khashm-el-Mus Bey was made commander in place of Nashi Pasha. Two companies of mounted infantry went with Sir Charles Wilson, and Captain Verner with Abd-ul-Hamid Bey took the native soldiers in the *Bordcin*; the *Es Safia* following with her own captain and crew. The expedition was chiefly for the purpose of discovering whether any immediate and serious attack was likely to be made by an advancing foe, or whether the enemy was in force at any place on the river bank within a certain distance of the camp; and so decided were the reports that such a force was approaching that it was arranged for the steamers to return immediately should those on board hear any sound of heavy firing in the direction of Abu-Kru. In passing Metammeh a few shots were fired at them from the banks, and the men on the *Talahawiyeh* replied, but without much apparent result; but on nearing Sayal, beyond Metammeh, the men on the look-out reported that they saw a battery in a Sakieh pit. It turned out to be empty, the gun having been taken away; but a party landed and demolished the battery, at the same time finding that from a sand-bank just in front of it they could obtain such a view of the surrounding country that they felt sure none of the enemy had assembled at Sayal.

Another battery was passed and they were approaching Shendy when on the bank they saw a man standing and waving to them. The steamer was run at low speed in to the bank and he was taken on board. From him they learned that the force of the enemy coming from Berber had stopped on meeting with the fugitives from Abu-Klea. He also said there were only three or four hundred dervishes in Shendy, and that a large part of these were ready to side with the government. This may or

may not have been true, but it was soon obvious that Shendy could not be taken with so small a force as that on the steamers. Verner in the *Bordein*, seeing the first steamer stopping, had brought up near the end of the town and had let some of his Soudanese men land and occupy a ruined house, from which they began to fire at some men in houses opposite.

Sir Charles Wilson, however, refused to land his men and attack the town itself, for Shendy was, he said, twice as big as Metammeh, and being on the opposite side of the river to the camp, could not be held even if it were to be taken.

The decision was justified by the sudden appearance of the Emir Wad Hazma, riding in with a number of followers soon after Sir Charles Wilson's boat hauled off. It was evident that he had been watching, and had followed the boats, and by the time Sir Charles Wilson's steamer reached the *Bordein*, Verner and his men were retiring from the fire of the enemy. At a ruined store farther down another man—one of the Shagiyeh—was signalled, and he confirmed what had been said by the first one, so that it was concluded there need be no fear of any large force coming from the north for several days. Shendy was not to be left undisturbed, however, for the steamers having hauled off into mid-stream, ten rounds of shell from each of the six guns were fired into the town as a parting salute, after which the boats went up stream. As they slowly approached the lower end of the island opposite the camp, those on board could see men crossing in boats to the right bank. The presence of men in the island was dangerous, as they might harass the camp by stealing up to it and firing into it, and therefore a number of the Soudanese soldiers were landed with orders to clear the place, a work which they effected by means of a wild and furious discharge of their rifles without much effort to aim at anybody, but with the result of frightening everybody who may have been there, to such an extent that, it was believed, not a soul remained for a longer time than it took to reach the water's edge.

In the camp an attack had been expected, and the work of adding to its defences had been going on pretty briskly, and

though the position was not the best that might have been found if the troops had moved to a greater distance, it was soon rendered pretty secure. There was a gravel terrace about three-quarters of a mile from the Nile, and the intervening space was filled by a cultivated plain, at the end of which the ground sloped rather abruptly to the river, and it was on this slope that the camp was formed, so that it was concealed from the land side but exposed to the opposite island on the river side, which was at first guarded by one of the steamers, and afterwards by the Egyptians who occupied a redoubt or earthwork on the island itself. It may be supposed that the men employed in this duty were the Turco-Egyptians or Circassians on whose removal Gordon had insisted, and who were accordingly left behind when Sir Charles Wilson started for Khartûm, to which he now expected he would have to fight his way, as he knew that the Mahdi had taken Omdûrman, and Khashm-el-Mus had reported that there were several batteries on the river like those that had been seen on the recent excursion beyond Sayal.

The plan of operations that had first been laid down had to be still further departed from. Beresford, who was to have manned two of the steamers with the naval brigade, and to take Sir Charles Wilson to Khartûm with about fifty men of the Sussex Regiment, was unable to walk, all his officers and many of the petty officers and the best of the seamen had been killed, and on the way back from the reconnaissance on the Nile he had asked Sir Charles to appoint Mr. Ingram of the Duke of Cambridge's Hussars to be an acting lieutenant of the naval brigade, as there were no officers and he (Beresford) could not go about alone. Mr. Ingram had already earned the reputation of a keen and able soldier, and though he had gone up the Nile as a correspondent of some minor newspaper, as a means of getting to the front had taken out a steam-launch, out of which he had to take the engine somewhere on the cataracts, but contrived to get the boat itself to Korti, and joining the desert column had fought in the front rank as a volunteer both at Abu-Klea and Metammeh. Mr. Ingram had proved himself by his coolness and determination to be able to take a

responsible position with the force, and so he was temporarily, at all events, converted into a naval officer, the only one beside Beresford who was to be left at Abu-Kru. Perhaps Beresford would have left him there and persisted in accompanying Sir Charles Wilson, but he was already the worse for his short voyage down the river. He offered to go to Khartûm, but it was thought better that he should remain, as there was no telling whether an attack on the camp might make it necessary for the steamers left behind to join in a fight; and he was even now so ill that he had to lie in hospital, and could only give the assistance of practical advice and instruction, which two of his artificers, who were to go with the expedition, helped to carry out. Sir Charles Wilson decided to take only the two largest steamers, the *Talahawiyeh* and the *Bordein*, which were better protected against the fire that would have to be encountered from the batteries. Khashm-el-Mus was to command the *Bordein* and Abu-ul-Hamid the *Talahawiyeh*, with crews and soldiers from the Soudanese taken from all the four boats and the two best pilots among them, for passing the cataracts. This work of manning the vessels was superintended by Lieutenants Stuart Wortley and Gascoigne and took several hours, even under pressure of the intimation that in another twelve days the cataracts would not be passable at all. It was hard work to get the two steamers ready and to complete the necessary repairs, especially as a good deal of the work had to be done by natives; but at eight o'clock on the morning of the 24th they started, some difficulty having been experienced in putting the escort into red coats, as Gordon had expressly desired should be done, in order, probably, to impress the people at Khartûm and outside it that an English force had really arrived. Red coats had been specially sent out, but they had been lost or looted, and it was found necessary to borrow those of the guards and heavy dragoons, which were sufficient in number and rather too much as regards dimensions when they were donned by the men of the Sussex. Sir Charles Wilson did not feel that he could take more than one officer and twenty men of this corps as an escort, and there were so many wounded at the hospital that he did not think

it right to take a surgeon or even an assistant surgeon. On the night of the 23d all was ready. The Sussex detachment lay down close to the steamers. Steam was to be up by daylight. Sir Charles was able to see that the convoy and escort, to bring provisions from Gakdul under the command of Colonel Talbot and accompanied by Captain Piggott with his despatches, were off in the evening, and it may be mentioned that this as well as other convoys to Gakdul and back were guided by Lord Cochrane, who dispensed with any native assistance and at night kept the route by the stars.

It may here be noted that the reports from Korti, dated the 28th (four days afterwards), said:—

“Our position at Gubat is very strong. The troops have an ample supply of ammunition, and also of provisions. It is believed that the enemy have large stores of grain in Metammeh. They have two Krupp guns there, but no regular earthworks. The houses and walls are, however, loopholed, and the place could not be carried without much loss of life. The general belief is that the enemy will evacuate Metammeh when our infantry, now starting, arrive, and will retire upon Berber.

Upon their way down the party crossed the ground where the fight of Abu-Klea took place. They saw the bodies of a few English dead which had not yet been buried. They had been stripped by the Arabs, but the bodies had been in no way mutilated. . . .

The Royal Irish Regiment started for their march across the desert to Gubat last night. When the men paraded Lord Wolseley addressed them, and complimented them upon the rapid and energetic manner in which they had pushed up the Nile in their boats. Their passage would be nearly, if not quite, the best made in point of time. Lord Wolseley said that he hoped to join them across the desert in a very short time. The regiment is in splendid condition, the men being inured to a hot climate by their recent service in India. They started in the highest spirits, although they have to march on foot, the men carrying their rifles and ammunition. The baggage and water are taken by camels. It is

calculated that they will perform the march at the rate of fifteen miles a day. The West Kent Regiment will follow very shortly. General Sir Redvers Buller and Lord FitzGerald started this morning, and will overtake the Irish regiments to-night. The weather is favourable for marching, having turned much cooler the last day or two.

Lord Wolseley has just received the report of the principal medical officer at Gubat. He reports that General Stewart is progressing most favourably. His wound is wonderfully free from inflammation, and he is suffering comparatively little pain. No attempt has been made to extract the ball, which entered high up in the groin. No bad symptoms have yet presented themselves, and there is every hope that the general will make a rapid recovery. He has been taken on board one of the steamers, where he occupies a comfortable and airy stern cabin. Lieutenant Crutchley, of the Scots Fusilier Guards, who was also wounded, is on board with him. The steamer is lying off Gubat. The hospital tent is pitched on the river bank, and the wounded are housed in tents, and lie on comfortable native beds.

The principal medical officer says that, considering the manner in which they have had to be moved, and the hardships they have gone through, the wounded are all doing marvellously. Two-thirds of the cases are severe, and the number of operations necessary will be large. Surgeon Magill is reported as having distinguished himself by his work among the wounded until he was himself hit by a bullet in the thigh. The principal medical officer reports that he shall send down to Gakdul all the wounded who can be moved, as soon as possible. Any quantity of supplies can be obtained in the neighbourhood if the natives will bring it in. There is no sickness whatever, so far, among the troops."

No attempt had been made to extract the bullet from General Stewart's wound, but yet there were hopes of his recovery; and, indeed, considering the hardships they had had to endure, and the moving from place to place, all the wounded were doing well. Two-thirds of the cases were severe, and the surgeons still had arduous duties to perform. Throughout the campaign the courage

and devotion to duty shown by the medical and surgical staff were beyond all praise. Sir Herbert Stewart was raised to the rank of major-general in recognition of his services, but it was felt, as Lord Wolseley had stated, that there was little or no probability of his ever again being on active service.

As we have seen, the tendency in some quarters in England was to calculate on too large or too decisive a result from the victories that had been obtained, and this tendency was fostered by the reported declarations of several of the prisoners who fell into our hands. Some of these who had been wounded represented that the Frenchman, Olivier Pain, was in command at Metammeh. Captain Piggott, on his way down to Korti, found a large number of the enemy's wounded at Abu-Klea. Some had crawled in by themselves, others had been brought down near the wells by their comrades, and were left there. Everything possible had been done by our garrison to relieve them: and they all seemed to say that they considered the cause of the Mahdi to be lost, as his followers would no longer believe in him after their defeat. It was said, too, that he was sending away all his valuables. It may be feared that these prisoners were placed in a position which they thought would be improved if they said only what their listeners might like best to hear; and throughout the campaign there seems to have been a tendency on the part of some of our officers to place too much faith in the reports or declarations of natives, whether they were messengers, spies, officials ready to protest their friendliness and promise their co-operation, or prisoners, professing to be convinced of the good intentions of the Khedive's allies. At all events, however, the scene at Abu-Klea must have impressed the wounded prisoners with the sense of disaster, for on the battle-field and its neighbourhood lay the bodies of their comrades—heaps of slain—and to bury these was one of the heaviest duties of our garrison there.

Of the steamers with which Sir Charles Wilson was to make the short voyage to Khartûm, we have already given some description. Those "penny" steamers, as Gordon called them, were in fact little larger than those that ply on the Thames, and



had been prepared by Colonel Stewart under Gordon's directions. Rough, and apparently make-shift as they were, they had been admirably adapted for the purpose for which they were to be used. Sir Charles Wilson gives some further details of them which are very interesting, as they refer particularly to the aspect and arrangements on board, at the time that he embarked with his escort and the native soldiers and Egyptians under the commanders sent by Gordon.

"The two boats were fitted in much the same way: at the bow a small space was left for the cable, and then came a rude turret of baulks of wood fastened together with iron pins, and built up from the deck so as to give a firm platform to fire over the bulwarks. The turret was not round, but splay-shaped, to fit the bows; it was bullet-proof, but not shot or shell proof, and it was open at top. In this turret there was one gun firing right ahead through a port-hole. At the foot of the turret was the cooking place, where all day long the slave-girls were baking dura-cakes for the soldiers and sailors. How they never set the ship on fire was always a mystery to me. Behind this hatchway was the fore-hold and a gangway on each side for landing; then the foremast, to which a bird-cage was slung for a look-out man—a sort of iron bucket; next followed, on each side, small dirty cabins at either end of the paddle-boxes; and between the paddle-boxes the midship turret—a square box built, like the other, of baulks of wood pinned together. The floor of the turret was just high enough to enable the one gun in it to fire well over the top of the paddle-boxes: it had a port on each side, and was reached from the after-part of the ship by a ladder which led to a small square hole, through which it took a moment or two to squeeze one's self. From the ports one could get out on to the top of the paddle-boxes. Thus any one going to the turret in action was unpleasantly exposed. Within the turret, shot, shell, and cartridges were lying about in a way that would soon have put an end to a boat not manned by orientals. After the turret came the funnel with many a bullet-hole through it, and the boiler, partly above deck, but protected by logs of wood placed over it. Then came the hatchway

of the main hold, and just behind it a saloon or deck-house, a slight wooden structure divided into two rooms and having a narrow passage running round it. On the top of the saloon a place had been prepared for infantry—by making walls of boiler-plate iron, except at the entrance. The wheel was on the top of the deck-house, and particular care had been taken to protect the helmsman as much as possible. Behind the deck-house was a little open space in the stern with a hatchway leading to a small hold."

As we have before noted, sheets of boiler-plate iron fixed to wooden stanchions and with a beam on the top of the stanchion so placed as to leave a space between it and the top of the plates sufficiently wide to fire through, had been placed round the sides of the ship and at the bulwarks and deck-house, but some of these stanchions had been broken and the sheets of iron torn away. When the steamers were overhauled, the fore-hold contained some ammunition, an enormous quantity of dhurra, "loot" of various kinds, and wood for the steamer, while in the main-hold were rifle ammunition, firewood, sacks of dhurra, bedding, loot, women, a baby or two, and a herd of goats for milk. In the after-hold were the loot and property of the commandant. Every corner of the space below the deck was full of dhurra, Indian corn, and "loot," but as provisions had to be taken for the relief of the garrison at Khartûm, the decks themselves were piled with sacks of dhurra. These made it difficult for such a number of men to move about much, and when it is added that the Soudanese crews, during the five months that they had been living on the Nile and played the part of river pirates, had suffered all kinds of filth to accumulate, it may be judged that the condition of all on board was disagreeable enough, especially as the steamers were infested with swarms of rats. A swarm of rats and a heterogeneous crowd of human beings within the limits of such a small vessel taxes the imagination, as it taxed the endurance of the English escort. There was no help for it, and there had been no time to clear out the steamers, even if any other arrangement could have been adopted in face of the fact that the native crews, the native soldiers, and the native

artificers were all divided into companies or gangs under their own officers. The commandant was supposed to have control over the movements of the ship and of the soldiers when they landed, but there was an officer commanding the black regulars, who had once been slaves; Bashi-Bazouk officers, who had brought their own slaves; an officer of artillery; an officer of the Shagiyehs; a captain of the crew; chiefs of the sailors, chiefs of the caulkers, the carpenters, and even the wood-cutters; and then the *reis* or pilot and his assistants, who navigated the vessel, the helmsman, the chief engineer and his assistants; and added to these were the black women, who ground the dhurra, slave-girls, who, throughout the subsequent dangers and in the midst of firing from batteries and fusillades from rifles, went on with their work quite calmly, grinding the grain by rubbing it between two straight pieces of stone; mixing the meal with water into a sort of porridge or batter, a lump of which, thrown on a large round iron plate, heated by a wood fire, and spread out with a little stick till it covered the iron plate, was converted into a thin pancake something like a "passover" cake, and being stripped off the plate was ready for eating.

What a strange assemblage on those two "penny steamers!" soldiers, who were all slaves, and all the officers black, except the Egyptian artillery officers; the Bashi-Bazouks, composed of black slaves; Shagiyehs, and half-castes; the Bashi officers, Turks, Kurds, and Circassians; the sailors, blacks; the engineers, Egyptians. Added to these were many men who had hidden themselves among the bags of dhurra,—some of them wounded men,—stowaways who sought to return to their families. The confusion before getting the men to work was disheartening; the turmoil, chatter, laughter, and shouting was deafening; but the blacks were like big good-humoured boys with tempers that even the occasional use of the courbash did not utterly spoil; and they could fight. The soldiers were armed with Remington rifles, but no bayonets. They had spears instead, and some of them carried swords also. Many of the men wore the decoration or medal given them by Gordon for the siege of Khartûm. There was

plenty of ammunition on board, and the guns were brass pieces (*canons rayés*) throwing a nine-pound shell.

Khashm-el-Mus, the commander, was Melik, or King of the Shagiyeh in the adjoining country on the right bank, and is described by Sir Charles Wilson as a rather short man of about fifty-three with grayish beard. He could neither read nor write; but Muhammed Bey Abud, a shrewd little fellow, grandson of the commander of the Shagiyehs who conquered Dongola at the end of the last century, did both for him, assisted by Sheikh Mahmud, one of Gordon's trusted messengers, who was shut out of Khartûm while on a mission to Sidi Osman at Kassala.

It appears that Khashm did nothing but sit and drink coffee and smoke. He, with Muhammed Ibrahim the interpreter, Gascoigne, and Sir Charles Wilson, occupied the saloon, in the small room at the back of which were the two servants and the native workman, and at the top of the deck-house ten men of the Sussex, who with all their belongings,—arms, ammunition, kit, and rations, may be said to have been in a little citadel commanding the whole ship in case of mutiny or any misunderstanding, no one being allowed to go to their quarters except the two helmsmen.

The Sussex detachment of a corporal and nine men in the *Talahawiyeh* were under Captain Trafford; and with them were Stuart-Wortley with his servant (who was a rifleman), an artificer of the royal navy, and a signaller. The medley crew of soldiers and sailors was like that of the *Bordein*; but the latter had 110 black troops and the former only 80; but she had in tow a dismasted nuggar full of dhurra for Khartûm, and carrying also 40 or 50 soldiers. All the arrangements, including the occupation of the place of vantage by the Sussex men, were the same in both vessels, and each flew an Egyptian flag at foremast and stern, though Sir Charles Wilson records that he felt inclined to pull these down as he disliked the idea of fighting under the Egyptian flag; but he had no others to put in their place, and the steamers after all belonged to the Khedive.

There was no interpreter on the *Talahawiyeh*, and Stewart Wortley had to make the best of his knowledge of Arabic,

“helped out by strong English and much vigour of action.” The commander of this vessel, Abd-ul-Hamid, also a Shagiyeh and related to Khashm-el-Mus, was a tall slight youth who had been highly recommended in a letter from Gordon, but whose chief characteristics appear to have been a petulant and sulky temper and a personal vanity which found expression in fine clothes, or rather in gorgeous-coloured robes. He bade fair to be a troublesome customer, and did not altogether confute the opinion that he was not to be completely trusted. There was no time to give effect to mere suspicions, however, nor to change the order of arrangement. The steamers were to go with all speed to Khartûm, and in order successfully to pass the batteries of the enemy on the banks, the Sussex men were to fire volleys at the embrasures directly they were within range. They could be relied on to do this duty steadily, and so might, at all events, diminish the attacks of the batteries; but the native soldiers were under little or no control, and therefore the only useful order they were likely to obey was to fire at any one who fired at them.

The end of the island was soon passed, and then the steamers began to open their voyage. A friendly native Shagiyeh was taken on board from the right bank, and he reported a battery with a gun a short distance ahead; but when Gascoigne, Trafford, and Stuart-Wortley with black troops landed, they found that the gun had been very lately removed, the marks of the wheels being still quite fresh. Some more natives who also went on board said that the gun had been put there by Wad Hamza, the Emir of Shendy, to prevent the steamers from going up, and that he had taken it away again on hearing that the steamers had gone down to Shendy. The same men brought promises from their chiefs to say that they would join our army when it came up. They were sent back with a message that the natives would be well treated by the British. Sir Charles Wilson also sent off a letter to Gordon saying that the steamers were on their way.

Soon afterwards, the “look-out” on the steamers saw at a considerable distance on the right bank a large number of horse and camel men; and this was a part of that force under Feki

Mustafa, which was to have attacked our camp at Metammeh; but Feki did not relish fighting with those who had made such short work of the onslaughts of Abu-Klea and Gubat, and so had halted about twelve miles from the camp. He was one of the Jalins of Zebehr's tribe, and a relation by marriage to Khashm-el-Mus, and had commanded the Arabs on the Omdurman side. A few shots were fired from the left bank as the steamers went on, till at mid-day wood had to be procured, and the blacks were landed at a deserted village to obtain it, but at once disappeared in search for loot instead of pulling down the houses for the sake of the timber, which had to be chopped and sawn into convenient lengths for the furnace, or split into firewood. The kourbash had to be pretty freely applied by the native officers before these wild fellows could be prevailed upon to leave a camel which they had found and killed, and the carcass of which had been slightly scorched or half cooked, at fires lighted on the ground. Curiously enough, one of them had gone up to Sir Charles Wilson as he was sitting watching them some time before and had inquired whether he wanted a camel, as they had found one. On his replying "No," they of course concluded that they could appropriate it for their own larder, and the object of their landing was entirely neglected. Even after the kourbash, they bolted off to the steamers with their joints of half-raw camel flesh and then returned to their work.

The steamers went at a slow pace, for they were heavily laden, and the water was so low that it was difficult to avoid the sand-banks, so that night had fallen when they reached a place on the right bank, where they could make fast and land the black fellows to cook and eat their dinners, while the officers all dined together, the two Mohammedans sharing one great dish which was placed upon the floor.

It was an enterprise of forlorn hope, not to the officers, who were sanguine of success, but to their commander, Colonel Wilson, who, even should he be able to make his way to Khartûm with those twenty British soldiers with their borrowed scarlet tunics, would reach there long after the time that he had first been expected, and then could take no better message for Gordon than

that no further relief could reach the place before the second week in March, that the force that was waiting at Gubat had been diminished by hard fighting, wounds, and fatigue, and that, as the few men who had come as an escort must return to camp, all that might be possible was to help in making a sortie as a kind of demonstration that would alarm the Mahdi's forces and (equally important) obtain provisions for the beleaguered and starving garrison.

At daylight the steamers were on their way again, for it was a race not only against time, but against the fast-falling Nile, and already there would be some difficulty in passing the cataracts. Then there were stoppages for wood, a large quantity of which was burned by the steamers, and to obtain which it was necessary to land men to pull down the houses of the deserted villages. The friendly natives, a few of whom were met here and there, reported that the victories of the English had produced a great effect, and it was known that another English army was coming up the Nile and across the desert, the numbers being, of course, much exaggerated. At Jebel Tanjur, a small isolated hill near the bank, and at Wad Habashi, a strong position where the steamers had before been fired at from a battery, it was found that Feki Mustafa had removed the guns, and all went fairly well, as beyond that place there was a good stretch of water for three or four miles. But the captains wanted to draw up at the head of it, as there the cataract commenced, and they declared they could reach no safe place to haul up at before dark. An hour and a half of daylight remained, which it would be folly to lose, and by dint of violent language and as violent gestures the captain of the *Talahawiyeh* consented to enter the Shabloka Cataract followed by the *Bordein*.

"Open stretches of water with dangerous rapids in which there are many rocks," writes Sir Charles Wilson. "I could not help thinking of Gordon's 'praying up' the nuggars on the Upper Nile."

The *Talahawiyeh* went on, and passing the last rapid got 500 yards ahead to Hassan Island, where there was a safe berth for the night; but it was near sundown, and just before coming to the

reach of open water the *Bordein* struck on a rock and was completely hung up. Fortunately it was bright moonlight, and men of both ships worked hard to get her off, but to no effect, and she had to be anchored till morning in the midst of a race and rush of water which, if the cable parted by a sudden slip of the vessel, would send her nobody quite knew where. All next day she lay while the natives working the sakiyehs or water-mills on the banks took shots at her with rifles, the blacks replying with fusillades which seemed to hurt nobody. Then the stores and ammunition had to be shifted, the soldiers landed, and by hauling on hawsers and manœuvring the paddles she was at last got off amidst tremendous excitement.

It was late on the morning of the 26th of January before the *Bordein* was quite clear, and then the men had to be got on board, and it was near noon when the two vessels were together again with the worst part of the cataract still to pass—the Shabloka Passage—through which the two captains were to take the *Bordein* first, and then return to bring up the other boat. The passage was through a channel of broken water studded with pointed rocks, and skirting one of a large number of wooded islands all said to be named Hassan, which are found in the cataract north of Shabloka. For some time all seemed to be going well, when there was a crash, and the steamer, shaking from stem to stern, was fast on a bank of sand from which the soldiers, standing in the shallow water, were unable to heave her off. At last the captain went down the channel on the other side of the island to the west to fetch up the *Talahawiyeh*, which anchored on the other side of the sandbank, the soldiers having landed on the island and marched up. Both captains were thus able to return in a small boat to the *Bordein*, and she was eventually set free, the soldiers being landed to lighten her, and after much skilful piloting she reached her consort just before sundown.

Another day gone, and although there had been no shots fired at the boats during the short and difficult journey, a day of great exertion with but little result. The scene itself under other circumstances would have been worth loitering for. The wooded islands



dense with vivid green undergrowths, the swiftly-rushing water, the yellow sand under brilliant sunlight, made a picture not to be forgotten; but Shabloka, a narrow passage between rocks, was just ahead, and then a gorge between steep hills where the rushing river was only about 300 yards wide. Two more friendly Shagiyehs hailed the vessels as they lay beside the end of the island in the evening, and their report was that there had been fighting round Khartûm for fifteen days, that Gordon had held his own, that the advance of the English was dreaded. The conclusion come to was that the Mahdi was trying to take Khartûm before their arrival. "We little dreamt all was then over," writes Sir Charles Wilson. Surely it would not now take long to fight the way to Khartûm.

Shabloka and the gorge were passed next morning; the Sussex men keeping a good look-out for an expected attack from the hills, but without a shot being fired to draw the volley with which they were to answer it; they reached a village opposite Jebel Royan, a hill from which, it was said, Khartûm could be seen. More wood was wanted here and hostilities commenced again, increasing as the steamers entered open water between flat banks, and continuing in a desultory way till night, when the men landed and, protected by a picket of the Sussex, went for wood to a deserted village at some distance from the river bank, and were at work till one o'clock on the morning of the 28th. In the afternoon, before reaching this place, a man on the bank had called out that another man on a camel had passed down with the news that Khartûm was taken and Gordon killed; but the same report had been made over and over again for weeks, and now the goal was almost in sight.

At six o'clock in the morning (the 28th) the *Bordcin* led the way into Khartûm; the Sussex men ready to fire volleys at the embrasure of the batteries while the guns of the steamers kept them engaged. A heliostat was to be used to signal to Gordon. At half-past seven they passed a hill which had once been occupied by a battery and guns to command the river, but there was no one there; then past Abu Alim, the seat of one of the Mahdi's emirs, and there lay Khartûm in the distance.

A warning shout from the bank reached them, saying that the town had fallen and that Gordon had been killed two days before; but the steamers were in for it now, and fighting soon began in earnest. Sir Charles Wilson went with the commander and the interpreter into the midship turret, whence he could give orders at once to the captain, the reis, and the engineer; while the commander crouched in a corner out of the way of the bullets.

Halfiyeh was reached, but it was a scene of desolation, almost utterly destroyed; and then began a *feu d'enfer* from guns and musketry, answered from both boats in turn as they passed through the hail of shots and bullets, the black gunners naked, except for a cloth round their waists, their captains directing the laying and firing of the brass pieces, the Soudanese keeping up a fusillade, the Sussex men sending volley after volley at the batteries. Both steamers passed through the terrible ordeal without much damage; the native soldiers and sailors were in a frenzy of excitement; and in a momentary lull all eyes were turned towards the government house at Khartûm, which could be seen above the trees. But there was no flag flying on the top of it, and Khashm-el-Mus at once declared that the place must have been taken, as Gordon kept the flag always floating above that roof. The truth had to be learned at any cost, and the steamers went on their course only to be again assailed by two guns and a heavy rifle fire from both banks just after passing Shamba, and all the way to Omdurman, while at the edge of Tuti Island a long ditch protected a line of men who kept up a continuous discharge at about 160 yards.

At first Sir Charles Wilson thought that the island was in the hands of Gordon, for the bullets of these men behind the ditch went across to the other bank, where the enemy's sharpshooters were stationed, and he actually gave orders to cease firing, and to run nearer to the bank that they might shout an inquiry. He even got outside the turret in the eagerness of his belief that these were men sent by Gordon to help the steamers; but a storm of bullets drove him back again to give the order to go on to Khartûm, which might be still holding out against the enemy.

Khashm was already certain that all was over, and that they

were running into the jaws of destruction; and it soon appeared that this was so, for guns from Omdurman, and guns from Khartûm, or from the end of the island near the city, poured out their fire, while a roll of musketry from each bank of the river kept up a perpetual accompaniment to the rush of the hurtling shells from the Krupps, or the hoarse murmurs of a mitrailleuse. On still, till they had reached the junction of the Blue and White Niles, and then they knew that there was no hope of entering the town, or of taking aid to him who had held it to the bitter end. Not a flag was flying in Khartûm. The two steamers which Gordon had kept there were not to be seen; but close to the town stood a multitude of dervishes with their banners, an overwhelming force, to resist any attempt at landing; the trenches at Omdurman were filled with riflemen, there were parties of men on the island of Tuti, and still the storm of artillery raged and roared. To attempt to land would be madness; to remain would be destruction; and the order was given for the steamers to turn and run at full speed down the river; the *Bordein* passing the *Talahawiyeh*, which had been delayed for a few minutes by running aground off Tuti.

All was over; and Khashm-el-Mus, who, like the rest of the Soudanese, had lost everything—wives, children, property—covered his face and sank into a corner of the turret. There would have been a collapse and a cessation of resistance but for the cool, self-restraining imperturbability of the English officers, who roused up the gunner and the native chiefs, not without some strong language.

Through the same course of smoke and flame they went, without responding to the signal of a man who came down to the bank on a white camel and waved a flag of truce; for the Mahdi's emissaries were treacherous, and there was no cessation of the roar of the guns. The steamers were not very seriously injured. One man was killed and five wounded, but all the officers had narrow escapes: Sir Charles Wilson was struck by a spent shot above the knee and his field-glass was broken in his hand. All the men had behaved well, and the Egyptian interpreter proved that he, at all events, was not one of the "hens."

The engagement had lasted four hours, and it was four o'clock before the steamers passed the last guns of the enemy. Then the commander and all the other Soudanese gave way to the crushing calamity that had fallen on them, and nothing but the sense of duty still to be done, and of the necessity for immediate action, would have prevented the British officers from giving way to an outburst of grief for the fate of the man whom they had gone out to rescue.

An island some miles down the river was reached by sunset, and two messengers wearing the Mahdi's uniform were sent out to obtain information. One of them, who was to go to Khartûm, reported on his return that he had met a Jali, who assured him that on the night of the 26th, which meant the night of our 25th to the 26th, Khartûm had fallen by the treachery of Farag Pasha, commander of the regular troops, who had opened the gates for the followers of the Mahdi, and that Gordon had been killed with all his men. The Mudir of Khartûm, Ahmad Bey Jalabi, had also been concerned in the treacherous act.

It was sorrowful intelligence, and so far confirmed what had been said by the Arabs who had been casually seen upon the shore, that a sense of deep depression settled down upon all on board the steamers, and must have told severely on the chief officer, Sir Charles Wilson, whose personal friendship and sincere admiration for Gordon lent an additional grief to news which affected every one, even the black soldiers, who showed with pride the pewter medals bestowed upon them by the great governor-general. But the British officers had other anxieties. The wounded had to be cared for, and Lieutenants Gascoigne and Stuart-Wortley undertook the duties that would have fallen to a regular surgeon had there been one on board. Again the collapse of the natives led some of them to contemplate deserting, even if there were not among them those who were so ready to make terms with the now-triumphant Mahdi that they would have turned traitors and deserters. It was thought necessary to keep a Sussex sentry ready, with orders to shoot any one attempting to leave either vessel. The cataracts were now more difficult than they had been

in going up, and the captains and *reises* were promised considerable rewards if they succeeded in getting safely to Abu-Kru. The usual small causes of delay, however, detained the boats, and the conduct of Abd-ul-Hamid and of Khashm-el-Mus, neither of whom could be roused to action, and the first of whom gave some signs of revolt and bad faith, was an additional trouble. On the 29th, at about noon, the *reises* declared that the cataract which they were then approaching must be passed by each boat separately and with their united aid. This was done without accident, and it was expected that the gorge might be passed before night; but at half-past four the *Talahawiyeh*, which was ahead, struck on a sunken rock and began to go down. The "accident" seemed to have been caused by a disagreement between the captain and the reis, who gave different directions, and the helmsman, not knowing what to do, kept straight on and struck the sunken rock.

Perhaps not for the first time there was a suspicion of treachery; but there was no immediate proof to justify such a charge; and none of the Soudanese seemed to care whether they were wrecked or not. Wrecked they were, for the steamer filled and went down, though not before Captain Trafford and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley managed to transfer to the large nuggar the men with the two guns, arms, small ammunition, and rations, and then to overtake the *Bordein*.

In the evening, when the natives from the *Talahawiyeh* had bivouacked on the island, and the Sussex men and the officers had gone on board the *Bordein*, the same man who had come down to the bank at Omdurman, waving a flag of truce, was seen signalling that he wanted to be taken on board. He had come all the way on his white camel, and brought a letter addressed to the British and Shagiyeh officers summoning them to surrender, telling them that Khartûm was taken and Gordon killed, promising a safe-conduct to anyone who chose to go and see for himself, inviting the English to become Moslems if they wished for peace, and promising protection to Khashm-el-Mus and his men if they would submit to the Mahdi.

Curiously enough, the messenger, who perhaps was desirous of distinguishing himself by inducing the officers to submit, by means of a lie or two and an artful touch of treachery on his own account, declared that Gordon was alive at Omdurman and wearing the Mahdi's uniform, that Khartûm had been surrendered without fighting, and that the garrison at Tuti had been killed for refusing to submit. Except the last these were falsehoods, too gross to gain an instant's belief on the part of the British, and he would probably have been turned off the vessel and sent about his business with a sharp message in retort to the Mahdi, but Khashm-el-Mus strongly represented that it would be desirable to meet cunning with cunning, until the steamer had passed the gorge and the cataract, where, as fresh guns had been mounted, there would be sure to be a serious attack. Khashm then, on his own responsibility, sent word to the Mahdi that he refused to give himself up unless the Mahdi sent him a special safe-conduct and promises of safety, but that on the arrival of these he would surrender the steamer and all on board to Feki Mustafa at Wad Habashi. Khashm was staunch. He had no belief in the word or the promises of the Mahdi—he had lost almost everything but his life, and was dependent on the English, with whom he had frankly determined to throw in his lot; but men who went on board the steamers endeavoured to persuade him to yield. Their arguments appeared to have some effect on Abd-ul-Hamid, but none on Khashm. It seemed so uncertain whether the captains and *reises* would not take an opportunity of deserting, that the sentries had orders to shoot them if they were seen to make the attempt—though, as Sir Charles Wilson remarks, as they were all of them as much at home in the water as fish, it would not have been very easy to prevent their desertion. The temper and intention of these blacks and their crews was very uncertain, but they all worked heartily enough in getting the remaining steamer and the nuggar safely through the narrow cataract, the steamer going first, stern foremost, and guided by means of hawsers. The captains and *reises* were praised and were promised handsome rewards on their arrival at Gubat. Gascoigne's servant told the British

officers that Abd-ul-Hamid had plotted to wreck the vessel, but that Khashm had denounced the conspiracy.

Whether the events which followed were the result of treachery or accident was never quite determined; but Sir Charles Wilson, after carefully considering all the circumstances, came to the conclusion that the state of the river and the difficulty of making the passage amidst sand-banks and rocks which were but a little below the surface would fully account for the calamity. On the 31st of January the *Bordein*, following the nuggar, had got through the narrow "gate," and dropped down the remaining part of the cataract, but again had to stop to find wood after having burned every bit that was stored on board, including the empty ammunition cases. An attempt was to be made to run at full speed past the enemy's batteries at Wad Habashi, where the steamer would be in great danger of being sunk by the heavy fire. One incident was enough to cause suspicion of foul play. Abd-ul-Hamid, while the vessel lay to, had contrived to send off a letter by a native whom he had found on the bank, a letter which he swore was to a friend at Khartûm inquiring as to the fate of his family. No dependence could be placed on his oath, but still there had been no sign that the reises and captains were false. They had used the greatest exertions to get through; and when the vessel had been stranded, had shown no disposition to shirk either labour or responsibility. There was nothing for it but to run through the passage in front of the batteries, and after leaving the cataract there was open water until that passage was reached. The low spit of Wad Habashi was in sight, the cataract was left behind, all was ready for a running fight, and Sir Charles Wilson, who had been on deck all the morning, had gone into the cabin for a few minutes' rest with the other officers, when there was a sudden crash that shook them all, and it was known that the *Bordein* had struck on a rock, though, as she bumped off again and seemed to be moving, it was supposed no great damage had been done. But a hasty inspection of the fore-hold showed that the water was rushing in at such a rate that Sir Charles Wilson had to order the captains to lay the vessel alongside a sandspit to prevent her

sinking before the guns, ammunition, and stores could be got out of her. The hole in the side of the steamer was too large and too far under water to be stopped, and an hour's hard work with the pumps and a line of men with buckets failed to diminish the depth of water in the hold. The *Bordein* was a wreck; and to add to the confusion, the sight of the various articles which were being dragged out of the corners where they had been stored, and especially the belongings of the officers in the cabin, was too much for some of the black fellows in the nuggar, who walked up to the spit close to the stern cabin, and made a rush on board for loot. The servants who were getting the things together were being thrust aside when Sir Charles Wilson ran down to the spit and, pistol in hand, threatened to shoot the next man who tried to board the steamer. Then the nuggar sheered off a little, the men on the *Bordein* were landed with the guns, ammunition, and as much provision as could be saved.

It is almost necessary to pause for a moment to consider the difficulties of the situation. The sandspit on which everything had to be landed was the end of a little wooded islet about fifty yards from the larger island of Mernat and completely commanded by it, so that it was obviously necessary to occupy both places until the stores and the men could be moved and a seriba formed on the larger island, which is about three quarters of a mile wide and some miles long, covered with long grass and containing trees scattered at various distances. It was first occupied by a picket of the Sussex, and in a small village in the centre were a few women, who, at the approach of the strangers, fled to that side of the island which was only separated from the mainland by about 300 yards of water, easily crossed in a boat which appeared to be kept in readiness for the passage. There was so little protection on the island that Sir Charles Wilson proposed to march down the right bank that same night by moonlight with the Sussex and the Soudanese soldiers; Khashm-el-Mus and a number of his men having already been sent across from the small island in the nuggar to take them out of the way of temptation while the stores were lying in a heap on the sandspit. Wilson remained on



Mernat with Ibrahim the interpreter, a small active, goggle-eyed Egyptian, who had been a friend of Arabi and yet remained thoroughly loyal, and used not only his persuasive tongue, but his remarkable power of noticing everything, and being here, there, and everywhere when least expected, to control the savage Soudanese and to check the symptoms of treachery. Trafford and Gascoigne returned to the islet to get the men ready to move. But the natives and their officers would not move. Even the kourbash was ineffectual. The black fellows were too deeply engaged in lighting fires and cooking all sorts of messes. The disasters of the expedition had demoralized them. Both they and their officers were in the collapse which is characteristic of the natives under adverse conditions, and it was possible that they might not remain loyal. It was a difficult situation to have to deal with such a strange divided crew and their different commanders, and especially with one like Abd-ul-Hamid, who was evidently contemplating desertion. It must be remembered, too, that there were not only men, but women (female slaves) and children. Sir Charles Wilson recounts how, at the time that the steamer had struck,—one of the black Shilluk soldiers seized a child of four or five years old and flung it into the river; whether under the influence of some savage superstition, intending to appease the river god, or in mere wild insanity could not be discovered, though some of the Sussex men who saw the deed at once pinioned the fellow and kept him prisoner. Several of the female slaves it seems belonged to Abd-ul-Hamid, who sat and sulked in their company, and to one of whom he seemed so much attached that it was thought he would not be likely to desert her, a conclusion afterwards proved to be quite unfounded, for he contrived to get away with his company of Shagiyehs a day or two afterwards, and left the girl behind apparently without the least remorse. Though he was a good riddance the event added much to the anxiety of our officers, who, even after they had done their best to prepare against an attack on the island, were liable to be overcome by numbers and had no means of escaping.

Of course the first thing to be done, even before moving to

occupy the island, was to send word to the camp at Gubat for steamers to come to the rescue, and at about seven o'clock in the evening Stuart-Wortley, who had manned the small boat with a crew of four English soldiers and eight natives, rowed steadily down till they were close to the battery at Wad Habashi, past which they allowed the boat to float in silence and so close that those on board could hear the enemy, who were on the look-out, discussing whether the dark moving object on the river was a boat or not, a point that was decided when the moon rose, by which time the men on board were rowing again, having passed below the battery, and, unhurt by the volleys fired at them, were quickly out of range, though their comrades on the island did not know this as they stood and watched the flashes of the guns.

The distance to Gubat was forty miles, and the rowers on the boat worked with such a will that the journey was accomplished in about eight hours. "No member of our small force as long as he lives will ever forget this morning," wrote Lieutenant Dawson on the 1st of February. "Just at dawn I was woke by some one outside our hut calling for Boscawen. I jumped up and went out to see who it was, and then made out, to my surprise, Stuart-Wortley, whom we all thought at Khartûm. I looked towards the river, expecting in the faint light to see the steamers; then seeing nothing, and observing by his face that there was something wrong, I said, 'Why, good heavens, where are the steamers—what is the news?' He said, 'The very worst.' Then it all came out, and how in the wreck he had left in a small boat and arrived at 3 A.M. I went at once for Barrow, who had been for some time staff officer to Boscawen, and told him, and he set himself to consider the situation. The first necessity was of course to get Sir Charles Wilson off his island, and also to be ready at any moment for an overwhelming force coming down from Khartûm and cutting us off. The Mahdi was now free to move his whole force, numbers impossible to estimate, and besides was largely reinforced by guns, many bigger than ours, and 15,000 stand of rifles.

It was decided to start off the convoy that night with every available camel to bring up reinforcements, and that Beresford in

his steamer should start at 2 P.M. this day, which he did, for the island. Boscawen, who had been ill for some time, not being well enough for the press of work entailed by the new aspect of affairs, now resigned the command to Colonel Mildmay Willson, Scots Guards, being the next senior officer."

The situation of the small expedition on the island was critical, for there was but a handful of Englishmen, and nobody knew how far the natives might be trusted; indeed it was pretty evident that some of them could scarcely be trusted at all. Khashm, however, was loyal, and exerted his influence by haranguing the men in obedience to the orders of Sir Charles Wilson. The interpreter, too, was not only a true, but a brave and accomplished fellow; and there was also Bakhit Agha, captain of the Soudan regulars, who had been one of Sir Samuel Baker's famous "Forty Thieves," and had worked his way up to be an officer in the pay of the khedive. Abdullah Effendi, the gunner who had so skilfully worked the gun in the turret of Omdurman, was a Saidi or fellah of Upper Egypt, and had been for years in the Soudan; and the one-eyed Hamid Effendi, also a Saidi, had been captain of the *Mansourah*, one of Gordon's steamers, which was sunk off Shendy. He had no business with the expedition, but had stowed himself away when it left Gubat and had only come out of hiding to offer himself for hard work whenever it was wanted. Ali Agha, the Kurd, captain of the Bashi Bazouks, too was firm. These men with Khashm-el-Mus were all certain to be killed or made slaves if they went back to the Mahdi, and they, at all events, had nothing to gain by desertion; so that as they could influence the men under their command or authority, there was some reason to suppose that more than half the natives would stand by the English; but it was necessary so to dispose them on the island as to make each company of men a check on the other when the seriba was finished and all were camped on the larger island, except about twenty natives who guarded the sandy islet against the probable landing of the enemy's riflemen. The river was now very low, and the steep bank of the island, from 25 to 35 feet high, was covered by a broad band of thicket or bush, which served as a screen from the

rifle fire on the left bank of the river. It was there that the seriba was formed, chiefly by the Soudanese, who cut large branches of the thorny mimosa and interlaced them in such a way that they would frustrate any attempt of the enemy to make a sudden rush. Inside the wall was a shallow ditch just wide enough for a man to lie down in. There was one gap in the thicket at a place where the bank was rather less steep, and this was made the landing-place where the guns and stores were carried up. Close to the path going down to the water Sir Charles Wilson with Khashm and his personal followers took up their quarters at the foot of a large bush, part of which the men cut away so as to form a small bower or shelter from the sun. From that point Sir Charles could see round the seriba and across the island. The bush was to be a rallying point in case of treachery, where the Englishmen and Khashm and his loyal followers might make a fight for their lives, or whence they might reach the boats. Trafford and his men of the Sussex were close by, then a few of Khashm's Shagiyehs reaching to the entrance of the seriba. A Sussex sentry was constantly pacing to and from the gate and the point at which Sir Charles Wilson was posted.

Even after these arrangements were made, Sir Charles was anxious to attempt to gain the right bank of the river and march down it, for though steamers were expected to come to the rescue from Gubat, it was by no means certain that they would do so, or that they would be able to pass the fire from the batteries without being disabled. Sir Charles sent for the chief officers, one by one, to tell them that steamers would be up in two or three days, but also talked over the possibility of crossing to the right bank and marching down, a plan which they believed would be practicable, as the great influence of Khashm-el-Mus with the Shagiyeh and the fear with which the Jalin regarded him, would keep the natives on the border of the river from making an attack. But some of these Shagiyeh soon crossed over to the island with a pacific message, and as it was impossible to prevent the natives who were not hostile from communicating with those outside the seriba, they were admitted, Sir Charles Wilson and Ibrahim

the interpreter being present at the interview with Khashm, to whom the men (one of whom was his relation, Sheikh Abulata) had brought two letters, one promising him the Mahdi's pardon if he submitted, and the other threatening him with everlasting punishment if he remained loyal to the English. "You are aware that we have been trying to save you, and that you were trying to destroy yourselves. After the wreck of the steamer yesterday—(the letter was dated '15th Rabia the second, 1302,' which represents 1st February 1885), you sent a boat to Metammeh to call the English to your assistance. Should the boat be destined to get there safely, and should the English come and take you with them to Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, remember that we shall conquer all the same, as it has been foretold by our Prophet; peace be unto him. If you live long enough you will see the troops of the Mahdi spreading over Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, after which there will be nothing left for you but hell and damnation."

This letter was addressed from Muhammed-el-Mabarsi, and Muhammed Mansur to Khashm-el-Mus, Abd-ul-Hamid, and Muhammed Abud; and probably the promise of restoration decided Abd-ul-Hamid to desert, which he did soon afterwards, with some of his men, aided by the Greek who had brought Gordon's letters, and like many of his countrymen played double that he might be comparatively safe whatever happened.

Khashm was proof against the message, and told his relation that he meant to keep to the English, who would in two days be at the island to protect him and his companions, at the same time asking the messengers whether they thought any force sent by the Mahdi could take the seriba. The Shagiyeh, who admitted that Stuart-Wortley had safely passed the batteries, replied to a question of Khashm, that they should remain neutral if English troops came up the river. Again Khashm refused to surrender unless the Mahdi sent him a letter under his own seal promising him protection and safety. Ten of Khashm's personal followers were sent off to Halfiyeh to get information about Khartûm and the fate of Gordon, the rumour of whose death the Shagiyeh had confirmed.

They said that many Shagiyeh had been slaughtered after the fall of the town, and that they had now determined to join the Mahdi.

Constant activity was necessary, for there was plenty to be done; and though the men who had come to the island to see Khashm had only a small boat (a sampan) which held but four persons, and Khashm assured Sir Charles Wilson that there were no larger boats below the cataract, as he, in obedience to Gordon's orders, had destroyed them all, watch had to be kept night and day to guard against attack, and the English officers had to explore the other side of the island to find a place where the men might be taken across to the mainland on the right bank. Then there was the small boat to caulk and repair, and oars had to be made from wood taken from the *Bordein*, for Stuart-Wortley had been obliged to take all except the broken oars with him to get to Gubat. There was a good deal of uneasiness in consequence of Khashm-el-Mus going out from the seriba and the place where he was stationed to speak to the Shagiyeh who came to endeavour to persuade him to return to the Mahdi; but, on the other hand, it was from these people alone that any tidings could be obtained of the real fate of Gordon and the state of affairs at Khartûm. At last some men brought a message that the sister of Khashm-el-Mus had come from Halfiyeh and wanted him to go down to the edge of the island to meet her and some other people. He was permitted to go, accompanied by Bakhit and Ibrahim and five of the Soudanese regulars, who were to remain in sight but out of earshot, while a picket of Shagiyeh was placed between them and the seriba. The party on their return to the seriba repeated that a man on the bank had told them that two steamers had left Gubat; and Khashm's sister had confirmed the story of the treachery of Farag Pasha, who gave up Khartûm to the Mahdi. She also said that Gordon had been killed while coming out of his room, and that there had been a general massacre of Shagiyeh, Turks, Egyptians, and Europeans; but as there might be some survivors she wanted money to ransom them. Sir Charles Wilson gave Khashm £110 for this purpose in case any of his family or that of Abd-ul-Hamid were still alive; and Khashm, accompanied by Bakhit and Ibrahim, went out again

in the afternoon, when, to their surprise, they saw on the bank Feki Mustapha, who was in command of the Mahdi's force at Wad Habashi. He had married a first cousin of Khashm, and used all his persuasions to induce him to surrender; but Ibrahim, sharp of eye and ear, heard the sister whisper to Khashm on no account to consent, as the Mahdi had determined to kill him. It was during this interview that Abd-ul-Hamid with one of the reis and the Shagiyeh picket contrived to get away. Affairs were very critical, and it was thought probable that an attack would be made on the island that night before the moon rose. Sir Charles Wilson determined that if Feki Mustapha made his appearance again he should be seized and held as a hostage during the march down the right bank, which was to be attempted at noon of the day following, if the steamers did not appear by that time. In the morning the troops were all ordered to keep within the seriba, and a plan was formed for the seizure of Feki Mustapha by Ibrahim Bakhit Agha with some of his men.

All the natives were in a state of excitement. Khashm-el-Mus was seen to go out of the seriba with two or three of his men; and Sir Charles Wilson had to remonstrate with him and endeavour to control his evident perturbation. The reises were all watched carefully, and the Sussex men who were on guard had been ordered to shoot either of them who attempted to desert.

Trafford and Gascoigne were at the end of the island on the look-out for the expected steamers. All was in a state of tension. If the steamer did not come by noon, the march must be made soon, for something would have to be done to prevent any outburst of excitement which would destroy all discipline, and would perhaps signify revolt. At that moment the boom of a gun sounded from the river below them. The change was instantaneous. With shouts of "Ingliz! Ingliz!" the natives waited almost impatiently for orders. From a tall tree a man could see the steamer firing on the battery at the fort, and that firing continued for a longer time than seemed necessary for the boat to pass the place and come up towards the island. Flags were hoisted on the stranded and half-sunk *Bordein*, to show the

position, three shots were fired from the gun according to the arrangement made with Stuart-Wortley, to show that all was right there, but still the relieving party in the steamer kept hammering away at the battery and apparently neither saw nor heard anything on the island.

One result of running up the flag was to draw the fire of the enemy who were on the left bank, and it was replied to without a moment's hesitation by the Remingtons and shell from the gun. So the conflict went on, and still the steamer, which had just before been almost hidden in smoke or steam, was swinging at anchor and banging away at the battery. Something was the matter—but what was it? An accident of some kind, no doubt. And if two steamers had come to the rescue, as reported, there was now only one, and what had become of the other?

Sir Charles Wilson at once determined to break up the seriba, march down the right bank, and try to join his force with that on board the steamer, knowing that they would then be a match for any number of the enemy who would be likely to oppose them. The order was given, and the Soudanese at once devoted their entire energies to carry away everything that belonged to them, and to steal everything belonging to anyone else that they could lay their hands on. Even the kits of the Sussex men which had been left on the bank while their owners were at work storing dhurra and ammunition on board the nuggar were looted. Meantime the enemy opened a sharp fire on the men who were occupied in preparing to march, and Sir Charles Wilson concluded that some of the deserters were with their assailants, as a heavy and continuous fire was directed to the place where Khashm and he had slept. The stores, ammunition, and baggage, the women slaves, the wounded, a few sailors, servants, a guard of the Sussex, and fifty Bazouks, under the command of Gascoigne, floated with the nuggar to a place on the right bank near the end of the island, and the small light boat was sent to the same place, to which the force marched down after breaking up the seriba, and began at once to cross in the small boat, after lining the bank of the island opposite the point of debarkation with Sussex men to cover the



landing, and placing a line of black sentries across the island to prevent a surprise. Ali Agha went across first with his Bashi-Bazouks and took possession of a little hill, and long as it took to cross in one small boat, the passage was made without any accident of importance. The nuggar was then floated down to a point on the right bank opposite to the steamer, there to wait till the rest of the force had marched down to the same place; for there was the steamer—*Es Safia* they made her out to be—her white ensign flying and the artillery duel going on as briskly as ever. On the bank, when the men landed, Sir Charles Wilson saw the messenger whom he had sent with a note to the commanding officer at the camp in case Stuart-Wortley should not arrive safely, and that messenger declared that on his way he had seen two steamers coming up. What then had become of the other if it had not been sunk by the battery?

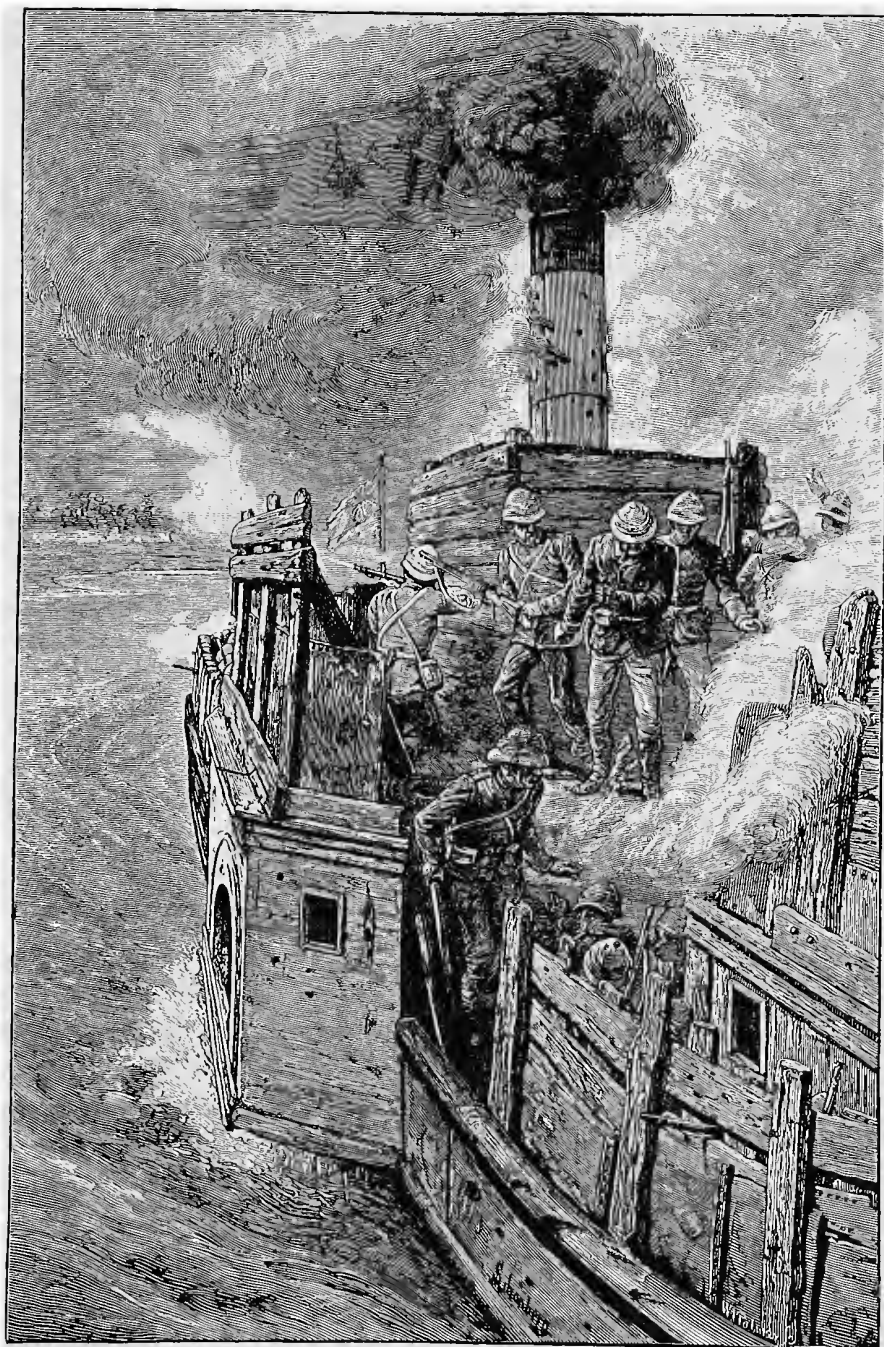
The truth was that there never had been two steamers; but a Soudanese seems almost incapable of telling the exact truth, everything must be exaggerated. Lord Charles Beresford had reached the battery, where resistance was expected, at the earliest possible moment, and had almost passed it when the steamer's boiler was struck by a round shot; she had gone on for about 200 yards further before the engine stopped; she then anchored, the Gardner gun and one of the small guns being plied on the battery with such effect that the enemy could neither bring their up-stream gun effectually into play, nor show their heads above the parapet.

This was only found out afterwards, when the force from the island had marched down to a point of the shore opposite the steamer, the black soldiers acting as a skirmishing party to cover the right flank of the column, and by their fire causing several horsemen who appeared on the route to beat a hasty retreat. On arriving at the place where the nuggar was waiting they could see that something was the matter with the steamer, and presently made out that those on board were signalling that the boiler had been injured, but would be mended in a few hours. They also learned that if they camped for the night lower down on a part

of the bank where the water was deeper the steamer would pick them up in the morning.

But there were still some hours of daylight, and after a hasty meal the men were soon ready to take a very prominent part in the fight with the battery. One of the guns was taken out of the nuggar, and Abdullah and his men were soon sending shells into the fort, while four of the best marksmen of the Sussex lay on the sand by the edge of the river and peppered away at the parapet and the embrasures with such effect, that though the distance was about 1100 yards the enemy could not put in a well-directed fire in return, and their attack on the steamer was drawn off to the bank where their new assailants continued the assault. So ill-directed was the enemy's fire that when Lieutenant Gascoigne with two native artificers and a native crew went off in the small boat to the steamer he made the journey and came back without any one being hit, though he was under what appeared to be a hot fire both in going and returning.

All on board the steamer were plucky enough, though one seaman had been killed, and Lieutenant Van Koughnet was wounded. Several were scalded by the sudden rush of steam when the boiler was hit. Mr. Benbow, the chief engineer, who had reached Gubat with the 2nd division of the naval brigade just before Lord C. Beresford started, was on board, and he was busy mending the boiler—a troublesome job, which he said would detain them till night, by which time Sir Charles Wilson and the men ashore would arrive at the point lower down, to which Trafford with the Sussex and Khashm-el-Mus and his men went forward to select a place where a seriba was made for the night, Sir Charles remaining with a few men and the gun to keep up the attack on the enemy's battery and draw its fire away from the nuggar, which floated down with the rest of the men, the wounded, and the provisions and kits. At sunset Sir Charles Wilson's party set off to march down through thickets and cultivated fields, where it was impossible to drag the gun, which had to be abandoned by the exhausted men, who spiked it, broke up the carriage, and pitched both into the river. At the seriba there was no food but corn cobs taken from the fields, and



BERESFORD ON HIS WAY TO RESCUE WILSON—

STEAMER'S BOILER PIERCED BY A SHOT. FEB. 3, 1885.



the grilled flesh of some goats which the men had caught; for all the provisions were in the nuggar and all the clothes and wraps. It was bitterly cold, too, and a wind almost as strong as a hurricane was blowing, so that the men at the seriba had to scoop hollows in the ground to protect them a little from the biting blast; and the small-boat, in which a few men and a number of women had set off from the nuggar without permission and had reached the spot where the seriba was built, could not be sent back, though a private of the Sussex, who had contrived to come with the truant party and reported their conduct, was sent up the shore to tell Gascoigne the boat was coming. The native crew could not row against wind and stream; and later on two Sussex men and two native sailors again strove to get back to the nuggar, but after two hours' hard work had to return. By that time it was known that the nuggar was aground on a rock close under the battery; for Gascoigne, finding the boat did not return, had tried to float past in the darkness, but had stuck fast. The Sussex private had come back to say that the nuggar was aground; and an hour past midnight a sailor, who had swum from the vessel to the right bank and made his way through the bush, brought the further message that she could not be got off without the small-boat helping to lay out anchors.

By daylight the wind had abated and the boat got back; but with the dawn the firing commenced again, and a strange and joyful sight presented itself to the little force on the bank. There were the steamer and the nuggar: the fire from the former being sharp and continuous, especially as the Gardner gun was briskly at work. Then as the daylight broadened the steamer was seen to run freely past the nuggar and to bring up in the middle of the river, without ceasing to direct a telling fire against the fort. In less than a minute a small-boat shot out from the *Es Safia* and made for the nuggar. On that boat were Mr. Keppel, the second of Sir Charles Beresford's officers, and a crew of blue-jackets. Sir Charles Wilson sent a number of men up the river to draw the attention of the enemy at the battery from the nuggar, which, with the rescuing boat, was only about 400 yards from the fort and

therefore under fire. The men on board and Keppel with his boat's crew went about the business of getting the clumsy craft off, however, and though the rifle-bullets pattered on her sides and shot and shell were whizzing and roaring overhead and in front of them not a man was hurt. The Arabs at Wad Habashi seemed to have been amazed at the escape of the steamer and at the persistent fight in which they had the worst of it. When they saw the little vessel getting up her steam, and noted that she was gliding away from them, they set up a yell of rage.

As the steamer, with the nuggar in tow, came abreast of the seriba, the men there were told to march about a mile lower down where there was a better place for embarking, and this having been reached without opposition, all were safely on board, and after taking in wood for the fires the rescued rescue expedition was on its way back to Gubat, which was reached before six o'clock the same evening.

None of the natives had deserted even when they might easily have done so while the steamer was under fire and in danger of being crippled; and though a court of inquiry was held at the camp at Gubat, and the captains and *reises* were tried by court-martial for the successive wrecks of the two vessels on the return journey from Khartûm, and one reis was found guilty, and sentenced to death, but recommended to mercy because he had brought Stuart-Wortley down in the boat, Sir Charles Wilson records his conclusion that both wrecks were accidental, and due partly to carelessness, and partly to the low state of the river and the sunken rocks, which made it difficult to take boats of the size of the *Bordein* down the cataract, especially when drawing more water than usual because of the turrets and iron plating.

Letters from home had been taken up by Stuart-Wortley on board the *Safia*, but no communication from head-quarters had been received at the camp at Gubat (Abu-Kru), the only reinforcements which had arrived being the 2nd division of the naval brigade, and the second half-battery of artillery. But all the camels that were of any use had been sent to Gakdul to wait for the reinforcements that were believed to be on their way to Gubat,

where forage for horses and camels was becoming scarce; and on the 11th of February—a week after the rescue of the expedition—a convoy arrived, consisting of the original escort under Colonel Talbot, with six companies of the Royal Irish, who had walked the whole distance across the desert from Korti. With them came Sir Redvers Buller, whose presence was at once an assurance that some decided movement would be made.

Sir Charles Wilson had already started for Korti. He had to report the result of the expedition to Khartûm, and the failure of the object for which the desert column had been sent forward. Sir Herbert Stewart still lay in so precarious a condition that it was feared the excitement of talking to him about the fate of Gordon and Khartûm would do him serious injury. Sir Charles, who never saw him again, says truly, "What an ill-fated expedition this has been! The whole Soudan is not worth the lives of men like Gordon and the two Stewarts."

Sir Charles, with an escort from the Guards' camel regiment, started for Korti at half-past one on the morning of the 6th of February, and reached Abu-Klea at 9 A.M., finding the Sussex detachment there unmolested, and strengthened by a detachment of heavies. The battle-field was still a horrible spectacle, for numbers of the Arab slain were still unburied. At Gakdul, which was reached in the evening, the return party met the convoy on its way to Gubat, and also General Buller and Major Kitchener, who were both going thither, though whether the general orders would be to take Metammeh or to retire, was doubtful, opinion being divided between the probability of the programme being to burn Metammeh and retire to Wady Halfa: or to regard the expedition as having come to an end with the fall of Khartûm. On the 8th the party started for Howeyiat, leaving the escort to return to Gubat with General Buller; and at sundown on the 9th reached Korti, where two days afterwards a telegram from the war secretary to Lord Wolseley said, "Express warm recognition of government of brilliant services of Sir C. Wilson, and satisfaction at gallant rescue of his party."

When the story of the expedition, of the fall of Khartûm and

the reported slaying of Gordon, reached England, the public feeling was intensified by the aggravation of party spirit. The questions that were being asked were, Is it certain that Gordon has been killed? Is there any foundation for the rumour that he contrived to reach the Greek Church and with a few of his faithful followers was holding it against the enemy? Is it not possible that he and some of those followers escaped and have reached the Equatorial provinces? In any case will the campaign be continued, if not till Khartûm be retaken, till Metammeh has been destroyed; till the force composing the Nile column fights its way to Berber, and there holds its ground in conjunction with the troops at Gubat; till a junction can be effected with the forces at Suakim and the opening of the route between the two places by the force which is now being prepared to renew operations against Osman Digma?

On the 4th of February Sir E. Baring had telegraphed to Earl Granville from Cairo, "All the reports received here from Suakim go to show that Osman Digma's power is still very great, and, indeed, that it has increased lately. A reconnaissance made by General Fremantle shows that he has a large force under him." At the same date General Sir F. Stephenson telegraphed to the Marquis of Hartington that he had received a message from General Fremantle reporting on a disaster that had befallen a reconnoitring party which, on the 3d of February, went out to Handoub, and being inexperienced were taken too far and failed to observe that the camel-men of the enemy were moving round to the rear, the consequence of which was that the party was cut off and a number of men were killed. The enemy had prepared an ambush, and the Hussars were obliged to gallop round the Arab flank under a heavy fire.

The news that Osman Digma was increasing his force was confirmed; but on the 8th of February an Italian steamer arrived at Suakim from Massowah, which, on the 5th, had been occupied by Italian troops under protest but without resistance. The palace and five forts were in their possession; the Italian and Egyptian flags were flying together, and a French gunboat was present, but there was no disturbance on either side. News had arrived at



Suakim that 350 camel loads of dhurra had reached Kassala, near which town the rebels had been defeated and had lost 350 cattle. Another report from Awadeb said that the enemy had been repulsed there also in an attack upon the El Gueder tribe.

On the same day Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Lord Hartington from Korti saying that the Kabbabish tribe, who had remained friendly and had agreed to act as carriers for the British force, had come in and were taking food to the troops in the desert. The Mudir of Dongola professed his disbelief in the news that Gordon had been killed in Khartûm. Lord Wolseley said:—"It is possible Gordon may, with small determined garrison, be holding out in intrenched church in Khartûm. I can, however, scarcely allow myself to credit this rumour. If authority be true I shall endeavour to carry out original programme." This telegram ends with the following advice:—"The sooner you can now deal with Osman Digma the better. I should recommend brigade of Indian infantry and one regiment of Punjaub cavalry to be sent to Suakim as soon as possible to hold that place during summer and co-operate with me in keeping road to Berber open; the English troops you send to Suakim might then either go to mountains near there for summer or to Egypt to be ready for autumn campaign. Earle is now making satisfactory progress toward Abu-Ahmed." An hour and a half after this message had been sent from Korti a telegram was despatched to General Stephenson at Cairo: "Arrange for immediate purchase of camels for service at Suakim. Further information as to numbers will be sent to-morrow." On the evening of the next day Lord Wolseley received from the Marquis of Hartington the message: "Force proposed for Suakim: six battalions besides battalion and marines now there: four squadrons of cavalry, two batteries artillery, two companies engineers, and section telegraph, besides departmental corps. This will make total of about 9000 all ranks. I apprehend difficulty, and certainly delay, in providing transport for so large a force. Please give your opinion as between this and smaller force, which could move more quickly. Indian brigade and cavalry demanded in your No. 55 is ordered."

It was in a telegram of the 4th that General Wolseley had first referred to the Kabbabish having engaged to carry provisions to Gakdul, and had said, "Saleh has furnished 250 camels, Sowarab and Hawauri have supplied us with over 500 on hire. Fall of Khartûm may alter their feelings for us." This was added to the message giving the reports from the camp at Gubat, and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley's account of the expedition to Khartûm, and the reports of the natives, one of which was that of Gordon being shut up in the church with some Greeks; but there was little if any doubt that the Mahdi had taken Khartûm, that he had been joined by the Shagiyeh tribes, and that the east as well as the left bank of the Nile was therefore hostile to us. The Mahdi's force at Metammeh was estimated at between 2000 and 3000, of whom 250 were horsemen and 400 to 600 were armed with rifles. It was stated, however, that the natives were in great fear of the English, that the Mahdi was hard pressed for supplies at Omdurman, and that unless he took the field in person he would have great difficulty in persuading his emirs to attack us.

General Wolseley telegraphed again on the following day to Sir R. Thompson: "I only await decision of government to give further orders;" and meantime a letter had been despatched from Earl Granville to Sir E. Baring:—

"I have to instruct you to inform the khedive that he may have full confidence in the support of her majesty's government, and you will also acquaint his highness that her majesty's government have given complete discretion to Lord Wolseley to take all such measures as he may deem necessary for the further conduct of his operations, and they have assured his lordship that he will receive any further assistance which he may desire, either by the despatch of troops to Suakim and Berber, or in any other manner he may indicate. Every effort will be made by her majesty's forces to rescue General Gordon in the event of his being still alive."

On the 9th of February Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Lord Hartington that Sir Charles Wilson had just reached the camp at Korti, and then gave some further particulars of the story

of the expedition to Khartûm and of the rescue by Lord Charles Beresford.

Thus we see that the situation at Suakim, the contradictory stories respecting Gordon and the advance of the Nile column under the command of General Earle, were the questions on which the decision of the government and the protraction of the campaign would depend. The advance of the Nile column was already anxiously awaited by the natives, and to a brief account of this movement we will now turn.

It was but two days afterwards, the 11th of February, that General Wolseley had to announce from Korti that he had just received a telegram from General Brackenbury from the camp opposite Dulka Island, which is about 70 miles above Merawi, giving some account of an "attack well planned and gallantly executed," which he (Lord Wolseley) expected would have the effect of opening the way to Berber without further fighting. Alas! that attack and the engagement which followed,—known as the battle of Kirbeka,—cost us dear. Another brave and distinguished officer, General Earle himself, the leader of the column, had fallen. Truly, the possession of the whole of the Soudan would *not* have been worth the price that was paid for the effort to hold or to deliver Khartûm.

The enemy had been found in position on the 9th of February when the force had reached Dulka Island, and General Earle concentrated the Stafford and Black Watch, reconnoitred the position, and on the morning of the 10th advanced to the attack.

"The enemy held a high ridge of razor-backed hills, and some advanced koppies in front close to the river. Two companies of Stafford and two guns being left under Col. Alleyne to hold the enemy in front, we marched with six companies Stafford and six companies Black Watch round the high range of hills, entirely turning the enemy's position, which we attacked from the rear.

The enemy's numbers were not great, but their position was extremely strong and difficult of access, and they fought with most determined bravery.

The Black Watch advanced over rocks and broken ground

upon the koppies, and, after having by their fire in the coolest manner driven off a rush of the enemy, stormed the position under a heavy fire.

General Earle was among the foremost in this attack, and, to the deep sorrow of every officer and man in the force, was killed on the summit of the koppie. The Staffords attacked the high ridge, and, over the most difficult ground it was possible for troops to advance upon, carried the position.

In this attack their gallant commanding officer, Lieutenant-colonel Eyre, was killed.

Meanwhile the squadron 19th Hussars, under Colonel Butler, swept round to the rear and captured the enemy's camp.

Our success is complete. We have captured ten standards, and the whole of the position is in our hands.

It is difficult to estimate the enemy's loss, but their dead are lying thick among the rocks and in the open, where, when they found themselves surrounded, they tried to rush through our troops. Scarcely any can have escaped.

Our own loss is as follows:—

Major-general Earle; Lieutenant-colonel Eyre, South Stafford; Brevet Lieutenant-colonel Coveny, Royal Highlanders; one corporal and three privates Royal Highlanders, three privates South Staffordshire, and two Egyptian Camel Corps. Missing: one private Royal Highlanders. Wounded very severely: Brevet Lieutenant-colonel Wauchope, Royal Highlanders. Severely wounded: Captain Horsbrugh, Stafford; Lieutenant Hon. J. G. R. Colborne, Stafford; Lieutenant T. Kennedy, Royal Highlanders. Wounded: twenty non-commissioned officers and men Stafford and eighteen Black Watch.

List will follow with written report by special messenger.

Prisoners report enemy led by Moussa Wad Abuhegel, Ali Wad Hussein, cousin of Lekalik, and Hamid Wad Lekalik, brother of Lekalik. All these are reported killed.

The enemy said to have consisted of the Monassir with some Robatat, and a force of Dervishes from Berber.

Our advance by river will be continued to-morrow at daylight,

and I shall endeavour to carry out your instructions to General Earle, with which I am fully acquainted."

The government was anxiously inquiring whether Lord Wolseley had learned any more of Gordon, and on the 12th he telegraphed:—

"Up to date have no reliable particulars about Gordon's fate. Press reports are based on rumours gathered by Wilson's party when descending Nile from Omdurman to Gubat. The mudir and all natives persist that Khartûm has not fallen; but Wilson is positive, and there can be little doubt on the point. Hope in a few days to have back messengers sent to ascertain facts."

Sir E. Baring had heard nothing more than this, but on the same day the following terrible message was sent from General Lord Wolseley to the Marquis of Hartington.

"Following received from General Brackenbury:—

*'Kirkbikan, February 11.*

'Following is translation of a document found to-day by a private soldier of Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in a donkey's saddle-bag about 400 yards behind the position we captured yesterday. Document begins:—

'A copy of a letter received from the governor-general of Berber to the governor of the section. In the name of God, &c., from Mohammed Kheir Abdullah Khoy Fali, Emir-general of Berber, to his friend Abdul Magiel Abi El Lekalek and all his men. I inform you that to-day, after the mid-day prayer, we received a letter from the faithful Khalifa Abdullah Eben Mohammed in which he tells us that Khartûm was taken on Monday, the 9th Rabi, 1302, on the side of El Haoui, in the following manner: The Mahdi (pray upon him his dervishes and his troops) advanced against the fortifications, and entered Khartûm in a quarter of an hour. They killed the traitor Gordon, and captured the steamers and boats. God has made him glorious. Be grateful and thank and praise God for his unspeakable mercy. I announce it to you. Tell your troops.' Document ends.

"It is dated the 13th Rabi, &c. On it is written, 'Received

Friday, 20th Rabi.' I shall continue my advance to-morrow.' Brackenbury's message ends. The 9th Rabi is the 26th January."

There was but little hope of Gordon being still alive after this.

We have already seen what was the plan and what the object of the river column, the advance of which had commenced on the 29th of December, 1884, to establish a post at Handab or Hamdab above the cataract and near Duguiyet.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Colville was at Abu-Dom, a kind of suburb of Merawi, with the vakeel of the Mudir of Dongola, and about 400 of the mudir's troops, with the object of collecting cattle, grain, flour, and firewood against the arrival of the column; but the vakeel was indifferent and defiant, and had eventually to be sent back to Korti under the representation that Lord Wolseley wished to see him. He afterwards confessed that the mudir had told him to give as little help as possible, and whether this was true or not, it was so much in accordance with the shiftiness and wayward treachery of these half-barbarous chiefs that it was felt to be necessary to convince him that his only safety lay in remaining loyal to the English. While he was at Korti his deputy was left to represent him along with the Turkish officer commanding the mudir's troops.

This collection of supplies was the initial difficulty, and as much of the food brought up by the Staffords was wanted for the desert column only thirty days' boat rations could be taken at first. The second difficulty was that of transport, to secure enough grain, flour, and other stores to maintain the strength and health of the men and the horses and camels, and yet to be able to convey them on that difficult river journey, the obstacles to which were unknown, was a problem not easy to solve. The order that companies were to keep together and that the duty of an officer in the last boat of each company would be to do all in his power to urge on and give necessary assistance to any boats in his company that might be falling behind, considerably helped the subsequent arrangements.

It was to Abu-Dom that the messenger returned who had been

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. pp. 265, 266.

sent with a letter from Lord Wolseley to Gordon. It was he who brought back the letter of three words, "Khartûm all right," and it was he who delivered the verbal message for the relieving troops to go quickly, by the right bank and to take Berber without dividing the force. This messenger had to be sent on to Korti in the same picket boat which carried the vakeel, and the naval officer in charge had no little difficulty in keeping them apart, in obedience to his orders.

On New Year's Day the Staffords finished the work of transferring to the left bank supplies from the government store on the right bank, and General Brackenbury, Major Slade, and Captain Beaumont rode forward for about eight miles to Belal at the foot of the so-called Gerendid Cataract, a name not known to the natives, and chose that spot for a bivouac. At night they ate their New Year's dinner outside Colonel Colville's hut, and fared well on eggs, chickens, a plum-pudding, a melon, a bottle of champagne, and a little whisky, the pleasure of the feast being enhanced by the arrival of the mail from England bringing home news and Christmas cards. It was late when the officers of the river column lay down to sleep on the soft yellow sand, and on the following morning they were up early, for the advance was made to Belal, where the Staffords in their boats, covered by the Hussars on the bank, arrived in the afternoon, and found a good supply of dates, milk, and bread brought for sale by the natives, the Kasheef Mohammed Wad Kenaish providing wheaten cakes, honey, melons, and milk, a good deal of which was the sour milk preferred by the Arabs.

Before leaving Abu-Dom there had been symptoms of hostile neighbours, for the telegraphic line to Korti had been cut about eight miles from the camp, and the engineers and Hussars who went out to discover what had caused the communication to be broken, saw traces of camels on the way to the desert; and now Major Slade, who went out with an escort from Belal to Hamdab to choose the ground for the camp where the troops of the column were to be concentrated and the expedition finally organized, heard that there was a force of 600 rebels at Birti, commanded by

a son of the Sheikh of the Robatab, who wanted to advance towards Handab against the wish of Suleiman Wad Gami, the Sheikh of the Monassir, who had, it was said, just left Birti for the purpose of laying his complaint before the Mahdi's emir at Berber. Birti was only thirty miles from the place where our troops were bivouacked, and at about the same distance on the right a band of robbers were raiding on the route from Duguïyet to Berber. The friendly natives were now to be left behind, and the pleasant aspect of the country was to be changed for rock-strewn cataracts, a rugged and comparatively barren shore, and a series of deserted huts and hovels. The Gerendid Cataract, known by the natives as Hajen Oolad Gurbar, turned out to be not a cataract at all, but a rapid between rocks,<sup>1</sup> and there did not appear to be much danger in the passage; but there was a report that a band of the Mahdi's patchwork-covered dervishes occupied the right bank opposite Ooli Island, and that the band of the robber chief had been reinforced by forty men from Berber. General Brackenbury chose a place for the camp at Hamdab, a mile further up the river than that first selected, as it afforded a better defensive position, and a view obtained from a mountain, Jebel Kulgeli, about five miles further, showed that there was nothing to stop the river passage for the boats between Hamdab and Ooli Island, the whole country being left desolate and uninhabited. Where any natives could be brought together, however, Lord Wolseley's proclamations of friendly intentions to the people were read and distributed.

On the afternoon of the 4th of January General Earle arrived at the camp with two of his staff. The force under his command was to consist of a squadron of the 19th Hussars (91 sabres), the Staffordshire Regiment, the Royal Highlanders, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, the Gordon Highlanders, a battery of Egyptian artillery, the Egyptian Camel Corps head-quarters, and 300 camels of the 11th Transport Company. The general was to concentrate the forces at Abu-Hamed, and as soon as he had collected there rations sufficient to last a hundred days per man,

<sup>1</sup> *The River Column*, by Major-general Brackenbury, C.B.



in which he was to be aided by Major Rundle, who had a large quantity of provisions at Korosko, and undertook to have a convoy of supplies at Abu-Hamed four days after the arrival of the column, he was to advance upon and take Berber, whence he was to forward as many supplies as possible to the force which, it was intended, should have reached Khartûm by land. All the tribes were to be treated as friends except the Monassirs, who were to be regarded as hostile unless they gave up the murderers of Colonel Stewart and his party. Supplies might be taken in the Monassir country by a portion of the mudir's troops, who were to accompany the force, and other natives who were hostile might be compelled to comply with the demands made upon them. Abu-Hamed, Berber, and other places necessary to the safety of the line were to be occupied, and it was to be regarded as indispensable that, as soon as possible, 75,000 rations should be placed at Shendy for the force operating by the desert. The native sheikhs might be assured that the English were there to restore tranquillity to the country, and to establish some form of native government acceptable to the people, while the property and the just rights of the inhabitants would not be interfered with, and all those who submitted at once, except the men and their accomplices who murdered Colonel Stewart and his companions, would be well treated.

Letters in Arabic had been prepared and addressed to the sheikhs of the various tribes, setting forth these particulars; and in case it should be found that Suleiman Wad Gamr, and Fakir Wad Etman, the two men who had been most concerned in the murder of Stewart, had fled, a special proclamation was to be issued offering a reward for their apprehension.

No further advance was to be made till the whole force could leave Hamdab. There was no nearer telegraph station than that at Abu-Dom, from which the force was now nineteen miles' distance; but Lieutenant Stuart of the Royal Engineers was soon at work superintending native labourers, who cut and erected poles, to which were connected the wires that had formerly belonged to the old Berber line that had crossed the desert at Duguiyet; and a camel post was temporarily appointed between Abu-Dom and the

camp, so that the river column received the news of the first march of Sir Herbert Stewart to Gakdul, and a little more than a fortnight afterwards (January 23d) they heard of the fight at Abu-Klea, though only few particulars reached them except that the enemy had been defeated after a very determined resistance.

The duty of concentrating the troops as they arrived at Hamdab was arduous, and General Brackenbury had to go once back to Korti, and several times to Abu-Dom. There was, however, no want of supplies, for on a market being established at Hamdab the natives brought in milk, dates, dhurra cakes, and vegetables, and were so well satisfied with the business they were able to do, that several of them afterwards followed the column for the purpose of selling dates and such other articles of food as they could take with them, and some went nearly as far as Kirbekan, three of them being killed by the savage Monassir a few days after the battle.

A report, which afterwards turned out to be without foundation, was brought that a force of a thousand of the enemy armed with rifles and with plenty of ammunition had left Berber and arrived at the wells at Bak with the intention of attacking the camp. This story was the version by Omar, the Sheikh of Duaim, of the news that a thousand men had marched from Berber under Abdul Majid Wad el Lekalik to reinforce the enemy at Birti, and that fifty men had joined the band of the robber El-Zain, who with a party of about a hundred and fifty "dervishes" and a number of cattle and stolen camels were occupying a hill from which they were able to go down to the wells for water. It was said, too, that at the wells of El-Koua, which were nearer to the camp at Hamdab by about eight miles, there were numbers of cattle and camels belonging to the Monassir. General Earle therefore sent to Lord Wolseley for permission to make a raid upon the whole cluster of wells before the column resumed its advance. This expedition was kept a secret except from Major Slade of the intelligence department, and Major Flood, who was to command the party and to take with him sixty of his men of the 19th Hussars, and about ninety rifles of the camel corps. A guide was

procured, and on the 18th of January, under the assumption that they were ordered for a short march out, to be followed by an inspection by the general, the mounted troops moved off into the desert, and then by a *khôr*, or dry water-course, made a short cut into the Berber-Duguiyet road. They reached a spot about eight miles from El-Koua by midnight, where they halted till four the next morning, when they started again and reached the cultivated *khôr* of El-Koua, only to find traces of the sudden flight of the enemy. This perhaps explained the fresh marks of a camel's feet which on the previous day had been noticed on the road in the direction of the wells. The guide (who afterwards joined the Mahdi) had probably contrived to give the alarm, and as there was nothing to be gained by pursuit, and the raiding party had already travelled about thirty-five miles, it was determined to go no further than to the end of the *khôr*, about three miles onward; there was little water at the wells, and the ground was difficult for cavalry, and therefore, after taking some grain that had been left, and burning a few of the huts, the party returned to camp, having, at all events, caused El-Zain and his followers to retire to a safe distance.

The original instructions as to the mode in which the desert column was to proceed had been considerably altered; but, as we have seen, their orders were to advance through the Monassir country, seize and garrison Abu Hamed, receive a convoy from Korosko, and advance on Berber—on approaching which, when within twenty miles, they were to signal by firing a gun and two rockets every night at midnight, when the desert column, which would have steamers and men six or eight miles above Berber, would answer, after which the steamers would reconnoitre and assist in the attack on the town. Major Rundle had 700 camels at Korosko ready for the march of the escort, and signals had been arranged to apprise him when the column were near Abu Hamed. The convoy leaving Korosko would take such letters and papers as could be sent from Cairo by the mail leaving on the 22d of January, and certain necessary supplies, as paint for the boats and shoes for the horses, were to

be carried also. The plan was as complete as it was possible to make it, but we know how impossible it became to make that junction with the desert column on which its realization appeared chiefly to depend.

The orders were that the column was to leave Hamdab on the 24th of January, and it was originally intended that a battalion of infantry should form posts between Abu-Dom and Abu-Hamed, so that a line of communication might be preserved, which, of course, would have enabled the general to provide for the forwarding of cattle and supplies; but this was found to be impossible, as the men could not be spared, and therefore all the supplies would have to be carried with the force, with the exception of such provisions as could be found on the route and those that would be forwarded to Abu-Hamed with the convoy to Korosko.

On the 20th of January Colonel Butler arrived at Hamdab, and on the following day Colonel Alleyne brought a party of voyageurs, and, assisted by Captain Orde of the rifle brigade, Captain Lord Avonmore of the Hampshire regiment, and Lieutenant Peel of the 2d Life Guards, prepared to direct the advance by the river; while Colonel Butler with the cavalry and camel corps was to reconnoitre along the bank and to select the positions where the force in the boats could encamp. On the 22d he had reached Ooli Island, where he found a suitable place for the camp, and was able to report that the passage of the river was free to that point, the natives having retired on his approach, though a few still remained at Ooli.

To Captain Courtney of the Royal Engineers and Captain the Hon. T. Colborne of the Royal Irish Rifles was intrusted the duties of surveying the river as the column advanced; but the passage of the troops to the camp itself was not effected without difficulty, and the later arrivals did not reach the camp till the day when they were to go forward; when Colonel Hammill was left in command at Hamdab with orders to send on the Cornwalls, two sections of the field hospital, and the Egyptian battery and transport company under escort of a portion of the camel company

under the command of Major Woodhouse. This was to be on the 25th and 26th, and he was then to follow with his own battalion and the other two sections of the field hospital. The Mudir of Dongola had, with much trouble, been induced to order his troops to enter the Monassir country by the right bank of the river. The vakeel went with them to take the opportunity of collecting some arrears of taxes. There were 310 of the mudir's men, who marched out of Merawi with a transport service of camels and donkeys and 120 rounds of ammunition per man, as well as a brass gun, which they used to fire off at night. The original instructions had again yielded to the necessities of the situation, and the leading battalions were ordered to make the advance on the 24th, leaving the rest of the troops and part of the transport to follow as soon as they arrived at Hamdab, which was to have been the point of complete concentration.

The means of providing a sufficient supply of food not only for the British troops, but for 200 Egyptians, 150 natives, mostly camel-drivers, 150 horses, and 530 camels, became a question not easily settled; but the difficulty was increased by the insufficient transport for such a quantity of rations and provender in what would probably be a hostile country. It was calculated that there would be enough food for the men for three months as all the infantry from Korti brought a hundred days' rations per man in their boats, and the other troops carried as much in their boats as practicable in addition to the material required for their special service. It was found possible to save a large proportion of these supplies by purchasing cattle and flour from the natives; and at Abu-Dom fresh meat and dhurra bread was obtained for troops who had brought "way rations" with them for the journey from Korti. At Hamdab a commissariat bakery was established, where four ovens built on the river bank could turn out nearly six hundred loaves a day, and cattle were bought to supply rations of fresh meat, so that the supplies of biscuit and tinned meat were reserved. It was found, however, that a large proportion of the provisions had been damaged in consequence of being imperfectly packed. Numbers of the tins had not been securely closed. Biscuits,

preserved vegetables, rice, oatmeal, and other stores had been damaged by water while they were being transported in the boats from Sarras to Korti. Above a fourth part of the biscuits were comparatively useless, nearly all the cabin biscuits being uneatable.

Horses, ponies, camels all required grain, which had to be carried, for no dependence could be placed on a supply being obtained after leaving Hamdab. There might be some green forage on the journey, but 1500 lbs. or five camel-loads of grain a day had to be provided. There were also water-tanks to carry, in case the force should have to make a flank movement by the desert; and there was all the flour required for the native troops to be conveyed by the camels, who, poor brutes, came worst off as usual, for little more grain than would suffice for the horses could be carried, and unless a supply should be found on the journey (not an improbable event) the "ships of the desert" would have to make the best of such forage as they came across in the deserted fields or patches of cultivated land by the river bank. Firewood also had to be found from day to day, for boats and camels were laden as heavily as they would bear, and fortunately the boats had been overhauled at Korti, and were fairly water-tight and sound, though some of them still bore the tin patches, which had been fastened on to stop a leak or repair a slight damage received on their way up the Nile. A number of articles sent to go with the expedition had to be rejected for the want of the means of carrying them. Many were comparatively or entirely useless. General Brackenbury mentions meat covers and skewers, large pewter measures and beer-taps, pairs of bellows, and coffee-mills. These, however, may be regarded as belonging to the material for a field-hospital of 200 beds, which had been forwarded to Abu-Dom, and the larger portion of which had to be abandoned, including hospital marquees, sheets, and pillows, (except a few for very serious cases,) and even blue waistcoats and trousers. Every extra pound of baggage was a difficulty, and General Brackenbury had to go off to Korti to see Surgeon-general O'Nial, chief of the medical staff, and Surgeon-major Harvey, who was to be senior medical officer of the river column.

The result was that nine whale-boats were to be devoted to the eight sections of the field-hospital, one of the boats to be for the senior medical officer, who would have charge of a few luxuries for the sick. Each section of the hospital was for twenty-five patients, who could be carried in one boat; but there were to be no tents unless urgently required, and they would then be provided from those carried for the troops; nor could a bearer company be organized, but it was settled that the eight stretchers for the wounded of each battalion should be carried by the bandsmen. It will be seen that as the column was to go forward, and could not form connecting posts, the sick and wounded must be taken with it, and therefore each corps was to carry its own sick in its own boats; and the sick of the mounted corps which travelled by land—were to be carried in the boats of the battalion to which they were attached for rations.

These are a few of the details of the careful preparations that had to be made, and we may not unprofitably consider them, because in superficially reading the story of a campaign we seldom are able to realize all that is meant by preparation and organization; and here was an expedition—a river column preparing for a journey which it was calculated would take about forty days—necessarily providing against all kinds of contingencies—for its progress was to be through a hostile, a little-known, and probably a barren country, with the need for constant vigilance against cunning and active foes, who would endeavour to cut off all supplies and lose no opportunity of harassing and misleading. Colonel Butler, who was now ready, had arrived at Korti in his boat manned by Kroomen after having concluded the arduous duty of superintending the passage of the boats up the rapids. He was now prepared to join them on their further advance, for he had spoken in enthusiastic terms of the willingness, good-temper, and constant exertions of the troops, and of their cheerfulness under what were occasionally great privations. He believed, as General Butler had said, that the boat squadron should perform the journey to Khartûm by the end of February, that is to say, in about forty days from the general advance of the river column. It was, how-

ever, understood that the worst physical difficulties with which the infantry would have to wrestle were to be encountered on the first part of the journey; for between Hamdab and Abu-Hamed there are, in addition to obstacles unmarked on the official charts, the cataracts of Tejai, Bahak, Edernah, Kabenat, Tuari, and Om Deras. The last of these was only between 60 and 70 miles from Hamdab, and once overcome the remainder of the journey to Abu-Hamed would, it was thought, be comparatively easy. But the whole of the work would be of an extremely laborious character, as the boats could reckon upon little assistance from the wind until Abu-Hamed was reached.

The latest intelligence before the starting of the column was that on the 23d of December Berber was quiet and contained only a few soldiers, the rest of the force having been scattered in the surrounding villages, but that the town was surrounded by an intrenchment, and some guns were placed on the left bank. At Abu-Hamed, on the 3d of January, there was a small garrison and no defences. Major Rundle and Sheikh Saleh Bey had made a reconnaissance to near Abu-Hamed in November, and the sheikhs who were then there not having reported it, had been replaced by two others. From Birti, news had been brought to the camp at Hamdab, to the effect that Suleiman Wad Gamr, having returned from Berber, had gone to Salamat to meet Lekalik, who had taken reinforcements of 1000 men from Berber, and was at Salamat waiting for more troops. On the 18th of January Lekalik was at Birti with 1500 dervishes and men of the Monassir and Robatab, over whom he had been placed in command, and he was said to have been desirous of advancing to fight the British column, but was persuaded by Suleiman to remain at Birti, where he still was, though Suleiman had tried to induce him to retire to the Shukook Pass. The force at Birti, in front of our advancing column, was about 3000, consisting of Berberines, Monassir, and Robatab, and about 500 were armed with rifles. Their commander was still anxious to come to a fight.

The date which had been fixed for the advance from Hamdab to Birti was punctually observed. On the morning of the 24th



the Hussars marched with half the camel corps, and at the same time two companies of the Staffordshire with Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne and other boat officers moved off by river, followed by the boats of the Royal Engineers, the remainder of the battalion and the Black Watch, with two guard boats manned by Gordon Highlanders. Colonel Colville, with the mudir's troops, kept to the right bank of the river abreast of the boats, and afterwards kept up communication by means of the heliograph. Headquarters started at about eleven in the morning after telegraphing to Korti that all was going well, that there were no sick, and that the men were in high spirits and longing for a fight. Colonel Hammill at Hamdab afterwards received orders for the artillery and transport to march with their escort on the 28th, the remaining force of the Gordon Highlanders to follow on the 30th.

The column had been handicapped by the alteration of plans made necessary by the course of events, and it was impossible to say with accuracy at what date it would reach Abu-Hamed. The passage of the rocky channels and the successive rapids was so difficult that it needed all the efforts of the troops to get the boats up, and at one place (Edermih) the men had to be landed, the arms, ammunition, and baggage to be carried for nearly a mile, and the empty whalers to be dragged up the rapids. On one occasion some of the boats had to be hauled up for repairs.

But there was another difficulty. The infantry in the boats, taking the only navigable channel on the right bank, were effectually separated from the mounted troops, who themselves had to proceed in a broken rocky and difficult country, and yet it was above all things necessary to avoid being surprised by the enemy. It was dangerous to send on a small force to bivouac far in advance, but at the same time it was essential that cavalry should scout well in front, and that provision should be made for reconnoitring not only the country, but the river ahead. The advance was, therefore, accomplished by sending on a half battalion of the Black Watch to form a post at Kabour with the cavalry and camel corps at a point where the Staffords, going by the right bank, would emerge into the open stream, while a half battalion remained at the bivouac at

Ooli, where they were soon joined by the Cornwalls coming from Hamdab. It is not necessary to follow the military movements by which the force was so ordered as to afford what may be called relays for mutual protection. One remarkable circumstance is recorded by General Brackenbury: when General Earle and his staff rode up the river as far as Kabenat they found a strong fort, with walls eight to twelve feet thick built of loose stones and capable of holding a garrison of 500 men, on the top of a high detached hill completely commanding the river and bank, and a similar fort opposite on the right bank, with swift water running between. The Soudanese tradition is that these forts were built by some Christian power centuries ago, but General Brackenbury says he is satisfied that they are of comparatively modern date. From them an extensive view was obtained, and Colonel Butler, who presently arrived there from his reconnaissance, reported that for five miles to the Kab-el-Abd Cataract the land and the river were clear and fairly open. All the country beyond Ooli camp had been deserted.

Scouting and reconnoitring in front, keeping a strong body in the rear and a good guard in advance, riding backward and forward to see the boats through, signalling from point to point, pulling and hauling the boats through the broken water of the falling river, the column moved slowly forward. A spy from Birti brought word that there were 2500 men there, and that the chiefs intended to attack when the boats were separated in the cataract of Kab-el-Abd. Colonel Butler was then ordered to push on with a sufficient force to come within touch of the enemy; and about two miles beyond the cataract found about 120 of the Arabs, who retired after a few shots had been exchanged. Colonel Colville had also gone ahead with a party of the mudir's men on camels to a village opposite Birti, from which he could see the enemy's camp. That evening Colonel Rundle, telegraphing to Korti, said that the sheikhs computed the force of the enemy at Birti to be at least 10,000 men.

After a further advance, by which the Black Watch and the Staffords were able to bivouac and construct a seriba on Kandi

Island at a wretched place at the extremity of a ridge of black rocks called Mishami, the mounted troops reconnoitred as far as Rahami Cataract, and Colville camped on Ukumtata Island, three miles above, where many of the channels between the islands were dry enough for his troops to pass.

On the 29th a reconnaissance showed that the enemy were found to be intrenched for a distance of half a mile at Birti parallel to the river, so as to be able to fire on the boats. Their numbers were estimated at from 2000 to 3000. Consequently on its arrival at the foot of the rapids one battalion was ordered to disembark, and to march to the top of the bank, and establish itself there, so as to protect the passage of boats. The next battalion having brought its boats safely up, was to protect the passage of the first, and so on.

Then came the news of the advance of the desert column, the intrenchment at Gubat, the appearance of Gordon's steamers, the advance of reinforcements of the enemy from Berber to Metammeh, and the serious condition of Sir Herbert Stewart; but General Buller, who was to take command at Gubat, sent the message, "If Khartûm is sufficiently provisioned we don't mean to do anything until you join us." This made it necessary to push on to Birti, but a spy had reported to Colonel Colville that reinforcements of the enemy had arrived from Berber, and the reconnoitring party had pushed to within a mile of Birti, where they thought there were evidences of a preparation to advance. At daybreak on the 30th a native dressed in white, who on the previous night had appeared within a few yards of the seriba leading a horse, surrendered himself. He had been an Egyptian soldier, one of the Berber garrison who had been compelled to join the Mahdi's troops to go to Birti under the command of Lekalik, and had deserted with a horse belonging to Moussa Wad Abu Hegel, and carried a rifle and ammunition. He declared that there were 5000 Monassir, 4000 Robatab, and 6000 Bishareen and Berberines in the enemy's camp, but only 300 rifles and thirty rounds of ammunition per rifle, and that the spiked gun from Stewart's steamer was there. It was then determined to march upon Birti if a way could be found, and General Brackenbury, with

Colonel Butler, Colonel Colville, Major Slade, and the deserter went out with the mounted troops into the desert to a hill at about six miles' distance from which they could see a dry water-course or wady leading to the enemy's camp, but nothing was to be seen of the enemy. In the evening another deserter came in and said that the birds had flown because of a report that an attack would be made on them both from the desert and the right bank of the river. The enemy (about 1500 this time) had marched towards Salamat to occupy the Shukook Pass.

The mudir's vakeel accompanying the troops on the right bank had been promised a large reward if he could secure Suleiman Wad Gamr and the blind chief who had caused the murder of Colonel Stewart, and he now reported that Suleiman's uncle had come in and asked for an assurance that he and the rest of his tribe might be received without being punished. To this the vakeel had replied that neither they nor Suleiman himself should come to harm. He considered that this was an excellent way of going to work, as Suleiman might be induced to come in by a promise of safety which there was no reason whatever to keep; and on being assured that no such assurance would be made, but that the murderers would certainly be hanged if they were caught, neither he nor Gaudet, the Turkish commander, could, for some time, believe that such a chance would be abandoned because it was to be brought about by treachery.

That afternoon Suleiman fled, and Colonel Butler reported that he had entered Birti and found it deserted. General Earle then rode on till he reached the place, and there discovered on the shore the boat that had belonged to the ill-fated steamer. It was then that Hussein, the man who declared himself to have been the stoker of the steamer, came up and told the story of the wreck and the murder.<sup>1</sup> He had been taken prisoner by Omar, Suleiman's uncle, who had made him a slave; and he was now so anxious to return to his native place in Upper Egypt that he contrived to escape on learning that he would be detained for the purpose of pointing out the site of the murder at Hebbah.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. p. 246.

On searching the houses in the village a large number of papers were found, and also some remains of articles that had evidently belonged to Colonel Stewart and his party. Among these were portions of French and English books, part of a field boot, the damaged face and battered case of an aneroid barometer which General Brackenbury afterwards ascertained had been purchased only an hour or two before Stewart left Charing Cross with General Gordon. These were all found in Suleiman Wad Gamr's house.

It was uncertain whether Suleiman had fled to Berber, but the report was that Lekalik and Moussa were holding the Shukook Pass while Suleiman collected his cattle, after which the chief would retire. Colonel Butler pushed forward, and mounted troops patrolled the country for six miles to the spot where Butler had fixed on a site for a camp, where there was forage, good ground for cavalry, and clear water to Birti. The country all around was uncultivated, stony, and broken, but Birti itself was a green spot in that wilderness of ugly rocks through which the troops had been making their weary way since leaving Belal. On the high fertile island opposite, as well as on the mainland, the growing crops were plentiful, the sakyehs in workable order, and some grain was found, either in the houses or buried in pits in the neighbourhood. Major-general Brackenbury says in his account: "The enemy's camp had been situated on uncultivated ground some distance below (down stream of) the village of Birti itself. A semicircle of low rocky hills surrounded it, the ends of the semicircle resting on the river. In the midst of it there was a low rocky eminence; and on this, on the slopes of the hills, and on the flat ground below, the dervishes had constructed their shelters of boughs of trees and straw mats. One of the most curious features of the camp was the number of places of prayer, of large size, prepared on spaces of flat ground by clearing away all stones, carefully marked by lines of stones, with the same point towards the east, with which we are all familiar on oriental prayer-carpet. Judging by my experience of native camps built in a similar way in Ashanti, I should say there had been from 1500

to 2000 men encamped here. We could see where the tents of the three chiefs had been, and the stables of their horses. Nothing of any value was found in the camp; a few cooking-pots, walking-sticks, one or two pieces of wood with verses from the Koran written on them, some inferior straw mats, were all that we could find. No arms of any kind were discovered, but a thousand rounds of Remington ammunition were found in one of the houses. The broad wady by which we had purposed to march to the attack led directly round the back of the camp to the cultivated ground behind, and had wide, easy passages leading right into the heart of the camp."

It was very disappointing to find that the enemy had fled, the more so as it was now evident that they might continue to retire from place to place, and it would be impossible for the column to come up with them. At that time the Black Watch was struggling in the Rahami Cataract, where the head of the battalion had been for three days, and not a boat had reached Birti. Before they concentrated at Birti on the 4th of February they had been four days in the seven miles of cataract, working from dawn to dusk, and had lost one man drowned, and two boats. The Cornwalls were then still in the same cataract. The Gordons had passed through that of Kab-el-Abd. It was weary work, and the Black Watch and Staffords having been sent on to Castle Camp, the place selected by Colonel Butler beyond Birti, General Earle made arrangements for the later comers to move forward immediately on their arrival, and Colonel Colville was therefore ordered to instruct the vakeel to cross the river with the mudir's troops and to occupy the country during the advance of the column to Berber, and to be ready on the 6th to advance with an escort to Salamat that he might accompany the headquarters, and assist in collecting information. Colville was also to cross the river and to bring the uncles of Suleiman, who were still with the vakeel, and some other sheikhs who had surrendered and were to be kept with our force as hostages for the good behaviour of their people, who were in the country which the column was about to leave.

The vakeel, who had been having not at all a bad time, but lived in a comfortable tent with rugs and cushions, and contrived to obtain coffee and other agreeable palliatives, was by no means disposed to go further. He sent word that he was tired, that the mudir would expect him to collect taxes at Hamdab, that it would have a much better effect if he and his troops remained where they were and prevented the reoccupation of the country by the Monassir, beside which he did not know the country near Salamat. His representation that he could not possibly start till the 8th, and that his going would be useless, was again urged at an interview with the general, which he held after crossing the river on purpose; and at last a compromise was made to the effect that he should immediately bring over his troops and occupy Birti. He took with him Abu-Bekr, Suleiman Wad Gamr's uncle, and Wad-el-Turki, a Shagiyeh partisan of the Mahdi, Omar, the other relation of Suleiman Wad Gamr, having run away. These relatives were believed to have a blood feud with Suleiman; but a letter from the murderer of Colonel Stewart had been found upon Abu-Bekr, urging him to attend a council and speaking of the disposal of the captives from the steamer, a letter which was not allowed to incriminate him, as he had come in on a promise of safety and had certainly not participated in the actual crime.

The whole of the property, houses, palm-trees, and sakyehs, belonging to Suleiman Wad Gamr, his uncle Omar, and other notorious rebels at Birti were destroyed, the Cornwalls completing the work of just vengeance after the Staffords and the Black Watch had gone forward to Camp Castle. About 250 date-palms were either hewn down or burned.

A large quantity of grain and flour had been discovered by the commissariat, so that horses and natives were fully rationed for above a month, and there was also six tons of wheat as a reserve. This was most fortunate, as both natives and our own soldiers had already consented to very limited rations of what may be called the comparative luxuries, including salt, sugar, and vinegar, and there was some fear lest, the supplies of forage ceasing beyond Birti, the grain for the cattle and the flour for the natives would

be exhausted, especially as nothing had been obtained between Hamdab and Birti except such forage as would be found for camels and horses in the cultivated patches. The people had buried their grain in the desert and had driven off their cattle. They would not bring in any kind of provisions for sale, and could not be induced to enter the service of the column as paid labourers.

The column had practically reached some miles beyond Birti. Colonel Butler had reconnoitred in the direction of the Shukook Pass, and, six or seven miles further than the place where he had fixed the camp, had ascended a range of hills near the upper end of the large island of Dulka, the highest point being situated on another island.

On the morning of the 5th of February Colonel Butler was told not to advance the boats further than the Castle Camp until the two channels beyond that place had been thoroughly examined, and Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne had discovered which was least dangerous and where the best spots for camping might be found. All was being prepared for a prompt and yet a safe prosecution of the march to Abu-Hamed. A boy wearing the Mahdi's uniform, and who had deserted from the rebel camp at Shukook, was sent to Colonel Butler to act as guide to the pass. The officers with head-quarters at Birti were only awaiting the report of that day's reconnaissance when a cipher telegram arrived from General Wood, who was acting as chief of the staff at Korti in the absence of Sir R. Buller. It was dated on the previous day (Feb. 4) at 8.50 P.M. and said, "I am ordered by Lord Wolseley to inform you that to his deep regret Khartûm was found by Wilson to be in possession of enemy. Wilson in returning was wrecked, but steamer has gone for him, and there is no apparent danger for him. You are to halt where you are until further orders."

It may be imagined with what grief the generals in command of the river column read this message, with what anxiety they awaited those further orders, which might indicate immediate recall and the end of the expedition after so many difficulties had been surmounted and when the enemy was probably within striking distance. They could only conclude that Gordon had been slain



and that Lord Wolseley was, like themselves, suffering the pain and mortification of personal sorrow and the conviction that all the efforts which had been made were ineffectual; that the primary object of an arduous campaign, the conditions of which were unparalleled in the history of modern warfare, had been frustrated, and that the declarations that had been made of the intention of the expedition would necessitate the abandonment of Khartûm and the withdrawal of our forces from any further attempt to vindicate the authority of the khedive in these western provinces of the Soudan, whatever might be done for the protection of the Red Sea territory and the occupation of Suakim and the eastern borders. The painful intelligence was not made known, however. General Earle and General Brackenbury kept it secret, and the cause of the immediate orders to halt could only be surmised by the other officers.

Before the receipt of the telegram a message had been sent to Lord Wolseley describing the position of the troops at Birti, the preparations for further advance, and the probable movements of the enemy; and he was informed that, though the route was exceedingly difficult both by land and water, a tangled mass of rocks quite unsuited for mounted troops, and affording neither good anchorage nor good ground for bivouacs, no resistance was anticipated on that side Abu-Hamed, so that the column would push on as rapidly as possible consistently with necessary precautions.

To Colonel Rundle at Korosko an intimation had been sent that the march beyond Birti had commenced, and that not only materials for repairing the boats and shoeing the horses would be required, but clothing for the troops. The trousers of the men and those of many of the officers were so worn as to be in tatters and beyond much mending. A prolonged halt would, it was discovered, present even more difficulties than an immediate advance. A message to the chief of the staff at Korti on the 8th of February stated the result of the estimate that had been made during the three days' occupation of Birti. The strength of the forces was 2966 officers and men drawing rations. A further large quantity

of grain had been discovered by foraging parties, so that there was enough for thirty days for the 140 horses, but none for the 580 camels, who, having eaten the green forage, would, in case of a prolonged stay, have little food supply. One of the great needs was a further supply of soap; for many of the boats were infested with vermin, the lice of Egypt, which were already in the clothes of the men. On the 6th General Earle rode over to the Castle Camp and imparted to Colonel Butler the contents of the telegram. On that day the whole of the troops were allowed to rest after the fortnight's toil which they had undergone, and they took the opportunity to wash their clothes and to attempt to patch the parti-coloured rags they were wearing as trousers. Either here or on the former Nile journey a patch made of a portion of a sardine tin was observed on one of the men. In the next two days the troops were busy improving the sanitary condition of the camps, providing for the supply of water, and exercising the camels, who were getting out of condition for want of their accustomed work. Preparations were made for the possible return journey; but on the other hand news came that the enemy from Shukook had advanced to Kirbekan, that they were less than a thousand in number and had about 150 rifles, and had taken up this position as one from which it would be more easy to escape in case of defeat. Lord Wolseley was waiting a reply from the government. The alleged reason for despatching the Nile force had been the rescue of General Gordon and the relief of Khartûm, and that result could not now be attained. Should it have been made at all? Should it not have been made earlier and with a larger army? Had the opinions expressed by Gordon himself, that the route could be opened from Suakim to Berber, been fatally neglected? These were current questions, amidst which disputants were agreed on the one bitter conclusion, that in spite of the undaunted courage and patient determination of our troops, by which difficulties apparently insurmountable had been overcome, and notwithstanding the extraordinary fertility of resource displayed by the officers, the expedition had failed to achieve the end for which it had been organized. Would the government think it consistent

with their previous assertions to give orders to complete the secondary purpose for which the columns had crossed the desert and threaded the intricate passages of the Nile cataracts? Would Berber be delivered and Abu-Hamed occupied, that the united army might strike down the power of the Mahdi by the junction at Berber of the Nile column, the reserve army, and the force now under the command of General Buller at Gubat, while, at the same time, the hordes in the Eastern Soudan would be defeated by the troops who were concentrating there to crush Osman Digma and to open up the route between Suakim and Berber?

“Lord Wolseley is communicating with government as to future operations, but he wishes you to push on to Abu-Hamed and await further orders there.” This was the telegram received by General Earle at 8 o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 8th of February.

Not a moment then was to be lost. The programme might be carried out after all, and the right to punish might be vindicated though the power to save had not been timely exercised. All was activity at Birti, to which the Gordons were immediately to proceed; while the Staffords, protected by mounted troops, were to advance from Castle Camp and to be followed by the rest of the troops when the obstacles presented by the rapids had been more carefully inspected. At Castle Camp the men in their red coats had just returned from church parade when General Brackenbury rode over with the order to go forward, and within half an hour the first boats had put off and the cavalry were scouting on the bank: Colonel Butler commanding the advanced guard after having instructed Colonel Eyre to make a camp on Dulka Island.

Colonel Butler with Major Hood and a score of Hussars going forward on the left bank, came close to the enemy, who were occupying the stony ground that had been patrolled by our men three days before. They were posted on rocky clumps or knolls commanding the track by which the cavalry were advancing. A few sharp volleys from our men drove them away from the posts to the tops and sides of the hillocks. Later in the day

two of the exploring boats landed crews and repeated the fire: but there appeared to be few rifles with the enemy, who apparently numbered about 200, chiefly armed with spears. The position occupied by the enemy was about two miles from Eyre's camp on Dulka Island, to which the two boats fell back just before sunset, Colonel Butler retiring to Castle Camp, the enemy following as far as the most advanced position which had been held by his men.

The river was between the position of the Arabs and Eyre's camp, and the Staffords could reach the spot where the rocky knolls had been held in about two hours, and the Black Watch could be brought from Castle Camp to the same spot in six hours. Colonel Butler proposed that the Staffords should land next day and that they should be covered with his mounted troops; as the battalion moved to the left bank the Black Watch was to be brought to the same place. He asked for two guns at Castle Camp, as the right and the rear of the enemy were within range of Dulka Island, and guns taken across by boat and carried about two miles along the island could take the position in reverse.

On the morning of the 9th, the mudir's troops crossed and bivouacked opposite their former camp. They were to hold the Monassir country and to forward supplies of cattle and grain. Soon after landing they found the mountain gun that had been taken from Colonel Stewart's steamer, but it was spiked, and most of its appurtenances were missing.

The mounted troops had occupied with their advanced posts the rocky knolls<sup>1</sup> which they had reached the day before. The enemy still retained their position, which General Earle himself reconnoitred from the rocks occupied by the cavalry vedettes about 800 yards distant. This position, which was to be the scene of the battle, was, in fact, the same as that patrolled by Colonel Butler when he ascended the hill to reconnoitre. The rocky hills directly in front of our troops and 50 to 80 feet high were held by the enemy, whose right was directly over the river. Between two of these eminences was the road from Birti to

<sup>1</sup> These are called "koppies" in South Africa, and therefore General Brackenbury gave them that name in his telegram of the fight at Kirbekan, and the name was retained.

Salamat, and as breastworks of stone had been built up among the rocks, the Arab rifles could have swept both the road and the river. From this position they would have to be entirely dislodged before the column could advance towards Abu-Hamed. Even with the series of knolls, and about 600 yards behind them to the left rear of the enemy, was the ridge before-mentioned, about 300 feet high and ending suddenly about 600 yards from the river. Its slope was as steep as the side of a glacier, and at the summit was a ridge of white marble rocks, described by General Brackenbury as projecting like the teeth from the jawbone of a skeleton. Along this summit men with flags and spears were moving among the rocks. These two positions of the enemy were apparently only outposts, perhaps capable of holding not more than 300 or 400 men, and the main body was probably behind the hills waiting to come out on the advance of our troops to attack them.

If it would be possible to move the right of our force under cover of the broken ground and march quite round the ridge (the same ridge which had been climbed by Colonel Butler on the 5th) our troops might then move round its rear and attack both it and the rocky hillocks. A wide detour made by Colonel Butler's reconnoitring party showed that the position could be turned by a march through a broad sandy wady, and that this wady could be approached by a road from our camp. It was, therefore, decided that preparations should be made for an immediate attack.

The attack was to be made next morning (the 10th). By sunset on the 9th the Staffords with two sections of the field hospital, the head-quarters, and seven companies of the Black Watch had reached their bivouac scarcely a mile from the enemy's position. Some of the troops—the wing of the Cornwalls and one company of the Black Watch—who had been struggling with the difficulties of the Nile channels, were still at Castle Camp; but there was no time to be lost. The infantry baggage was to be packed in the boats, the rest of the baggage with the baggage animals to be packed on the shore in front of the boats. The boat of the royal navy with its gatling-gun, commanded by Lieutenant-colonel Eden, was to be ready to sweep the shore and the river up

stream. The Staffords in red coats and the Highlanders in kilts were to breakfast and be on parade by seven o'clock, fully equipped with one day's rations, water, and ammunition, with reserve ammunition carried by camels for them and for the guns; stretchers and bearers for the wounded, and a detachment of the field hospital with two camels carrying water. Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne was to be in command of two companies of the Staffords and the two guns, and was to occupy the rocky knolls held on the previous day by the cavalry outposts, and to hold the enemy in check in front, attracting their attention during the flank movement.

In the afternoon a telegram had come from Lord Wolseley:—"The government have decided that the Mahdi's power at Khar-tûm must be overthrown. This most probably means a campaign here next cold weather, and certainly the detention in the Soudan of all troops now here. A strong force of all arms goes as soon as possible to crush Osman Digma. We must now take Berber. Buller will now take Metammeh. Let me know early the date you calculate upon reaching Berber, so that Buller's force may co-operate with you."

Three hours later a letter in cipher from Lord Wolseley to General Earle dated 7th February came in. It contained a fuller account of the communication between Lord Wolseley and the government. The rescue of Colonel Wilson by Sir Charles Beresford's steamer had not then been heard of at Korti. The letter said, "I congratulate you upon the progress you have made, although I am naturally very sorry the enemy have not tested the temper of your steel. However, let us hope their courage may be stiffened by the fall of Khartûm and that you may strike them hard before you reach Berber." The night passed without an alarm. General Earle and General Brackenbury sat up late talking over Lord Wolseley's letter and discussing the position. The question was whether the enemy would again retreat before the attack could be made. At daylight, however, the cavalry vedettes reported that they were still in position. The men paraded eager for the fray. Lieutenant Eden's company of the Black Watch were set to work to form a small seriba, and when

this was completed Alleyne's two companies and guns marched off to occupy the ground left by the cavalry outposts, and at half-past seven the column started, the Staffords leading, the Black Watch following, with field hospital and camels between the two, and with orders to move with the left column. The formation was designed to enable each column to take advantage of the easiest ground for marching, and to be ready to close so as to form square or oblong, with stretcher bearers and camels inside.

Through a broad wady of loose sand the farthest edge of the jagged ridge was reached. The part of the column had been covered by the cavalry, Colonel Butler leading; the left flank by the Egyptian camel corps, lining the edge of the broken ground opposite to the high ridge. The column marched round the eastern end of the ridge, and, turning sharp to the left, passed through a rocky valley in the direction of the river with the ridge to the left with a low rocky range running at right angles to it. From the high ridge a sharp fire was opened on the column, and some of the Staffords were left to engage the enemy there while the column advanced by a valley amidst rocky eminences, also occupied by the rifles of the enemy. Two companies of Colonel Eyre's regiment were sent to take the high ridge by its western shoulder, and under a heavy fire they climbed about a third of the way up the shoulder to a clump of rocks which gave them some shelter. While two companies of the Black Watch moved to the river bank to prevent escape in that direction, and to clear the rocky mounds near the river, the remaining Black Watch and Staffords advanced and swung round to the left to face the stony hills from which the fire was directed, and by a succession of rushes and with well-directed volleys they advanced from point to point till they reached some rocks not more than 400 yards distant from the series of knolls where the enemy was in position. Between them and our men there was now only open ground swept by the fire of the Arabs, and while the two companies of the Black Watch first mentioned, and a company of Staffords who had accompanied them had advanced along the bank and taken the rocky height nearest to the river,

driving out the enemy at the point of the bayonet, and at once bringing a flanking fire to bear on the other "koppies," a body of the enemy armed with spears and with a man in their midst carrying a flag, boldly descended from the heights to the open ground and charged towards the nearest companies of the Black Watch, only to be received with a terrible fire which swept away those in front, and caused the rest to turn and run for the river. Then the order for the assault rang out, the shrill skreel of the pipes was heard above the sharp rattle of rifles and the hoarse murmur of the battle-cry, and the Black Watch charged over the clear space and stormed the rocky knolls, not stopping till they had reached the highest points, while the men on the high "koppie" by the river bank advanced from the flank and seized the height nearest to them. It was one of the most gallant assaults ever made, for the enemy were ensconced behind loop-holed breastworks, and hidden in the clefts of the steep, rugged hills, which were difficult to scale in the face of a continuous fire; but our men never wavered, never stopped till they had taken these two main positions. The Arabs remained fighting stubbornly to the last: not even those who were concealed in the holes and sconces of the rocks being suffered to escape.

But it was necessary to call the men to form again in regular order, and General Earle had decided to bring them into their ranks on a small, level space between the two principal hills, where there stood a hut built of stone with a roof of thatch. General Earle, who was directing the formation of the ranks, was standing within a few yards of this hut when a sergeant of the Black Watch pointed out that it was occupied by some of the enemy, who had just shot one of our men. General Earle ordered the thatch to be set on fire; but on being warned that there was ammunition in the hut, ordered the roof to be pulled down, and went towards the spot. General Brackenbury, who was close to him, said, "Take care, sir, the hut is full of men." Our soldiers had set fire to the roof, and General Brackenbury's attention was for a moment diverted by seeing a native who had rushed out of a side door instantly bayoneted. At that



moment General Earle fell, shot through the head from a small square window in the hut, close to which he had approached. He lived only for a few minutes afterwards, tended by Lieutenant St. Aubyn and Surgeon-major Harvey; and General Brackenbury at this critical moment had to take command.

There was but a short pause for the first expression of sorrow at the loss of the chief. The men had still to be brought together for the work that lay before them, and General Brackenbury, having ordered two companies of the Black Watch to remain as a picket on the hills that had been taken, sent to assemble the Staffords, when the terrible message was brought to him that the two companies of these men, who, earlier in the action, had attempted to take the high ridge, had failed to reach a higher point than the cluster of rocks, where they had found some shelter at about a third of the way up; that Colonel Eyre, who was in command, lay there shot through the heart; that Captain Horsbrugh and Lieutenant Colborne had been severely wounded; that a number of men had been killed or seriously injured; that there were only four rounds of ammunition per man left, and that this had been reserved as the enemy was still holding the ridge. General Brackenbury at once directed four companies of the Black Watch to form a reserve at the foot of the hills, and, sending for Lieutenant-colonel Beale, who now succeeded to the command of the Staffords, instructed him to take the remainder of his regiment, and, with the help of the company which had been left to watch the hill early in the day, to reinforce the troops who were already there and assault and take the position. This was done. The Staffords went boldly up the steep side of the hill, and with a succession of rushing charges made their way to the summit and bayoneted the Arabs, who, like their companions on the koppies, fought desperately to the last.

It had been a day of sheer hard fighting, and all who were engaged had deserved high praise, including the Egyptian Camel Corps, who, under Major Marriott, had protected the flank of the infantry on its advance, and from their position in front of the high ridge had kept up a fire upon the heights. One Egyptian soldier

had charged up the hill alone when the Staffords stormed it. He, at all events, was an exception, or rather, he perhaps afforded a proof that the "hens" gather courage when they are led and supported by Europeans. Leaving the two companies of the Black Watch on the koppies and sending two companies to bivouac on a high island of the Nile at the head of the rapid, General Brackenbury ordered the remaining troops back to camp. Colonel Buller with his handful of hussars had early in the day proceeded to the river bank and thence to the entrance of the Shukook Pass, and in the rugged gorge had found the deserted camp of the enemy with standards, camels, and donkeys, with some of which, without any casualties caused by the fire of the enemy from the adjacent hills, he returned to the camp.

The fight at Kirbekan had lasted for five hours, and throughout that time the hospital service had been admirably accomplished; dressing stations had been established at various points, and the medical officers had accompanied their men into action though both they and the wounded were unavoidably much exposed to the cross-fire during the engagement, at the close of which the bodies of General Earle, Colonel Eyre, and Colonel Coveney were carried into camp, while those of the other brave men who had fallen were committed to a grave on the river bank.

At sunset, an appropriate hour for a ceremony so sad and solemn, the bodies of General Earle, Colonel Eyre, and Colonel Coveney were laid side by side in deep graves near the foot of a solitary palm-tree amidst a silence scarcely disturbed except by the low boom of the minute-guns echoed from the dreary hills where the battle had been fought.

But the word was still "Onward," onward to Berber; and immediate arrangements were made by General Brackenbury to advance the troops which had more recently arrived and had not been engaged at Kirbekan, and to push through the Shukook Pass to Salamat and to Hebbeh, the scene of the murder of Colonel Stewart and his companions, where further punishment was to be inflicted by the destruction of the village and of the property of Fakri Wad Etman, the accomplice of Suleiman Wad Gamr.

The cost of the victory at Kirbekan was heavy. General Earle, Colonel Eyre, Colonel Coveney, and nine men killed; four officers and forty-four men wounded, of whom three men of the Staffords died two days afterwards. Captain Lord Avonmore also afterwards succumbed to enteric fever, caused by excessive exertion in the engagement and constant exposure to the sun. To receive his body a fourth grave was made under the palm-tree, and he was laid beside his brother officers, who were buried on the evening of the battle. Sixty-one lost from a force of twelve hundred.

The fight at Kirbekan had, however, proved that our men could meet the Arabs, not only by forming in square and repelling their furious charges, but in open order and even when the enemy was in a position which might be regarded as almost impregnable when held by a few determined troops. General Brackenbury thought that there were about 800 of the Arabs holding the rocky hills and the ridge when the attack commenced, and that half of these escaped before the attack commenced, and a few more when the fight had commenced; but that the rest fought desperately to the last. Sixty lay dead on the two main hills, sixty-five on the ridge, a number more below, while there must have been more concealed from view, and many were shot in attempting to swim across the river. The total loss was computed at 200. Among them were many of the leaders of the rebellion; Abuhegel, Ali Wad Hussein, Hamid Wad Lekalik, brother of Abdel Megid, and Abou Lekalik being reported to have fallen. Suleiman Wad Gamr was not present at the fight, having gone to Suleiman to collect his belongings and take them into Berber.

In the account sent to Lord Wolseley the general said:—"Our troops having turned them out of these positions must have a great effect on the spirit of the enemy. I sincerely trust it may prevent our having to fight our way to Abu-Hamed, as, if we have many such fights as to-day we shall be seriously embarrassed how to carry on our wounded. If it enables us to pass the Shukook Pass, which is still before us, and to get through the rapids ahead without more fighting, it will, indeed, be a valuable day for us."

The wounded were reported to be, on the whole, doing well, and it certainly seemed as though the air of the Soudan, notwithstanding its variations of temperature, was favourable to the recovery of our men. Already the wounded from Gubat and Abu-Klea were arriving at Korti, whence on the 12th of February Lord Wolseley telegraphed:—"First convoy of wounded just arrived. Nine officers and thirty-four non-commissioned officers and men. I have visited all of them, and found them in the best spirits and looking very healthy, the desert air having done them much good. All anxious to be well again, and to have another fight with enemy."

At about the same time an official report was made of the passage which the whole moving force had made up the Nile above Wady Halfa to Korti.

General Buller and Colonel Brackenbury, before they had both gone forward with their expedition, had made inspection of the force, and at that time had estimated that the total loss from drowning had not exceeded eighteen men, and that the average loss of boats was not more than three per regiment, an astonishingly low figure considering the difficulties and danger of the cataracts and rapids which the boats had to surmount.

A boat, the *Lotus*, had at that time arrived at Korti with a cargo from the lower Nile, whence she had made a rapid passage, and was to return at once with sick to the hospitals, so that regular arrangements were made for the conveyance of the invalids towards Cairo. At the date of the operations of the Nile column Lord Wolseley had issued a special general order as to the progress and conduct of the boats, saying that the following battalions, in the order named, had completed the journey from Sarras to Debbeh in the quickest time:—First, the Royal Irish; second, the Gordon Highlanders; third, the West Kent. The second division of the naval brigade, under Lieutenant van Roughnet, the Royal Irish, and the West Kent, particularly distinguished themselves by the excellent order in which they brought up the boats and supplies. The second division of the naval brigade and Captain Forster's company

of the Royal Irish had handed over the stores intrusted to them in complete order as received, nothing being either damaged or missing.

Lord Wolseley congratulated the Royal Irish regiment on having won the small prize offered to them as a mark of his personal appreciation of the toils which all had undergone. He hoped that, as they had been first on the river, so they would be among the first to enter Khartûm.

The general recognized fully the gratifying way in which all the battalions under his command had worked, and warmly thanked both officers and men for the untiring spirit they had exhibited in overcoming the serious obstacles they had to encounter. All had worked cheerfully under severe privations, and continued and arduous toil, and Lord Wolseley said he would have pleasure in bringing their energy and discipline under the notice of her Majesty.

## CHAPTER IX.

Our Army at Suakim. Forces under Sir Gerald Graham. Loyalty of the Colonies. The Patriotic Advances of Australia and Canada. New South Wales to the Front. The Hon. William Bede Dalley and his Friends. Public Spirit. The Australian Contingent for Egypt. Excitement in the Colonies. Departure of the Troops from Sydney. Retirement of General Buller from Gubat. Recall of the Nile Column. Return of Troops to Korti. The Latest Accounts of Gordon and Khartûm.

There was no longer any doubt that a considerable force would be sent to Suakim to oppose the gathering horde of savage Hadendowas and other tribesmen, who were ready to fight under the command of Osman Digma, who was collecting his forces at Tamanieb. It was known that the construction of the much-contested railway from Suakim to Berber was to be again attempted. Light infantry had been ordered from Gibraltar to Egypt. Bengal and Bombay native infantry and Bengal cavalry had been selected at Bombay for service in the Soudan. The Shropshire Regiment were to go in the transport *Deccan* from Malta. The Indian contingent to be sent to the Soudan was to number 2600 men, including 500 sabres; and the Indian government at Calcutta had received orders to send a brigade. At Cairo a second battalion of mounted infantry 200 strong was formed for service at Suakim. In London and at the various depôts and dockyards all was excitement as the preparations for sending a strong contingent were pressed forward. There was a sound of war in the air, for Russian generals and their troops were skulking on the Afghan frontier, and the czar, as usual, was prepared either to bully, to lie, or to temporize according to circumstances. There were more reasons than one for preparing to call out our reserves and to organize our resources; but the immediate cause was the apparent determination of the government to make a late and hasty stride for the purpose of opening the route to Berber in the event of the desert column and the Nile column meeting, and General Lord Wolseley joining them with his forces and taking the command against Khartûm.

A supplementary estimate of the amount that would be required during the year ending March 31, 1885, to meet additional expenditure for ordinary services and for military operations in the Soudan was issued, the sum required being £942,000. The amount was made up as follows:—general staff and regimental charges (including gratuity for operations in the Soudan, 1883-84), £50,000; medical establishments and services, £22,000; militia pay and allowances, £10,000; commissariat, transport, and ordnance-store establishments, wages, &c., £20,000; provisions, forage, field allowances, transport, and other services, £270,000; clothing establishments, services and supplies, £40,000; supply, manufacture, and repair of warlike and other stores (including £30,000 for armaments for coaling stations abroad), £315,000; works and buildings (chiefly for railway, piers, water supply, and hut accommodation at Suakim; also £5000 for defences of coaling stations abroad), £235,000; and miscellaneous effective services, £5000.

Orders were received at Aldershot to form a second additional semi-permanent telegraph section immediately for service in the Soudan, partly composed of postal volunteers and reserve engineers; and the government contractors received additional orders for the construction of hospital huts for the Soudan campaign.

Reports from Suakim showed that up to the 6th of February the enemy had been making repeated night attacks on Suakim. Colonel Chernside was there or at Massowa (where the Italians were soon afterwards established), and all the coast was said to be in the hands of Osman Digma. The friendly tribes were active in their opposition to him and his followers, and on the 18th of January actually looted fifty-seven camels at Tamai and took them into Suakim on the following day; but the rebels followed in force, and were only kept off by the guns at the works and on the ships. At that time there was nightly firing, and it was evident that the power of Osman was increasing, though after the 6th of February, when it was reported that his followers were excited and alarmed by the report of the advance of the English by the Nile and the desert, the attacks on the town ceased.

By the 12th of February the news of Gordon's death and the fall of Khartûm had reached Canada; at the same date it had reached Sydney, Victoria, and Adelaide, and was soon known throughout the Australian colonies.

As early as November, 1884, there had been some tentative offers from our Canadian brethren to send a force to join the army in the Soudan, and now similar offers of immediate participation in our efforts for the suppression of the Mahdi and his lieutenant Osman Digma, were coming from our brethren in Australasia.

These offers represented aid which, when combined, would have been by no means insignificant. The forces in the colonies which were waiting the answer of our government amounted to some 50,000 men; and if it had come to a question of defence against a really formidable enemy, of course these numbers could have been greatly increased. The Canadian militia had been vastly augmented since the act which followed federation. Canada was said to have a total of 37,000 men of all arms, raised by twelve militia districts; while a number of military schools trained a fair supply of officers. The latest report of the general commanding-in-chief represented the forces as improving in efficiency. Australia, with a total population that must have passed three millions, needs fewer men under arms, having no common frontier with another state. New South Wales counted a little over 2000, costing £85,000 annually; Victoria had about 3500, of which over 400 were naval; and when the reorganization was complete it was reckoned that she would possess thirteen war vessels, including four cruisers and three torpedo boats. The other Australasian colonies were defended in like manner, New Zealand presenting a total effective of not much less than 6000—a large force, which was necessary on account of the presence of the Maoris, who, though at that time friendly, could not be ignored in the military calculations of the colony. Then there was the Cape, which required a considerable force for its own defence, and could show a total of between 4000 and 5000 regulars and volunteers. We could not look to the South African colonies, however, which had quite enough to do to provide for possible troubles on their own



borders. But without reckoning this group of colonies, the remainder was seen to possess very considerable military resources, a review of which was calculated to increase our respect for the native vigour, the self-dependence, and the organizing power of the colonists.

On November 25, 1884, Lord Lansdowne, Governor-general of Canada, had communicated to Lord Derby an application by Major-general Laurie for active employment with any Canadian force that might be raised for service in Egypt. The war office, in reply, stated that there was no intention to organize such a force. The offer was renewed on February 7, General Laurie, Colonel Arthur Williams, and others, undertaking to raise forces. The war office, however, again declined the offers.

On February 12 Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, telegraphed the offer of the Colonial government of infantry and artillery, to be landed at Suakim in thirty days. In subsequent telegrams it was mentioned that the colony would defray all expenses. Lord Derby telegraphed on February 14 accepting the offer with satisfaction. Other offers from Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia were contained in subsequent despatches from the governors of the respective colonies. On February 20 Lord Derby telegraphed to Sir W. Robinson, Governor of South Australia, requesting him to communicate to the other colonies her Majesty's high appreciation of their patriotic offers, explaining the reasons which induced the government to accept the offer of New South Wales, and observing that if operations were prolonged till the autumn they would take the offers into consideration.

The New South Wales government offered two batteries of artillery and an effective disciplined battalion of infantry 500 strong. On the 14th of February Lord Derby telegraphed that the government would accept the offer of New South Wales with much satisfaction, but that two batteries with ten guns were really more than they could make any use of in the plentitude of their own arrangements. He added that the main operations against Khartûm might be delayed until the autumn, but that if with this

knowledge the colonial government would prefer the immediate despatch of the contingent there was "no desire here to delay it." The Canadian government had, after inquiry, sanctioned recruiting for active service in Egypt or elsewhere; and the governor-general had on the 12th of February suggested that three battalions, each 500 strong, should be sent, one from the marine provinces, one from Old Canada, and one from the north-west. In reply the Canadian government was informed that its patriotic offer was highly appreciated, and would be considered if operations were prolonged into the autumn. It was at the same time pointed out that the New South Wales offer was of a different kind, and that no preference for that colony was implied in accepting its fully-equipped force. On the 17th the offer of Victoria was repeated in a perfectly definite form. It was to send 600 or 700 men fully equipped, consisting of a naval brigade and mounted infantry, the latter a peculiarly valuable arm in the circumstances. But on the 20th this, as well as the offer of South Australia and of Queensland, was declined with thanks, on the same grounds as those alleged in the case of Canada, and with similar explanations. It was feared that a certain reticence exhibited by the Earl of Derby in replying to these offers, and in what was mistakenly imagined to be a slow recognition of the enthusiastic loyalty that prompted them, would cause very great dissatisfaction in Canada, and perhaps also in South Australia, when the offers of the colonial governments there were declined. Happily, however, the reasons for hesitating in both cases were not altogether misunderstood. Should the whole force in Egypt have to go into cantonments, or seek a refuge in a specially-localized camp during the hot season, an accession of a large number of men, for whom our government would have to be responsible, would represent an additional anxiety, and it was afterwards known that our Canadian countrymen deferred their offer, or rather left it over till a later date, when it was understood that should it be accepted there would be no difficulty in raising 2000 or 3000 men in the Dominion. The agent-general for Victoria received from the Hon. James Service, premier of the colony, a telegram: "Victoria

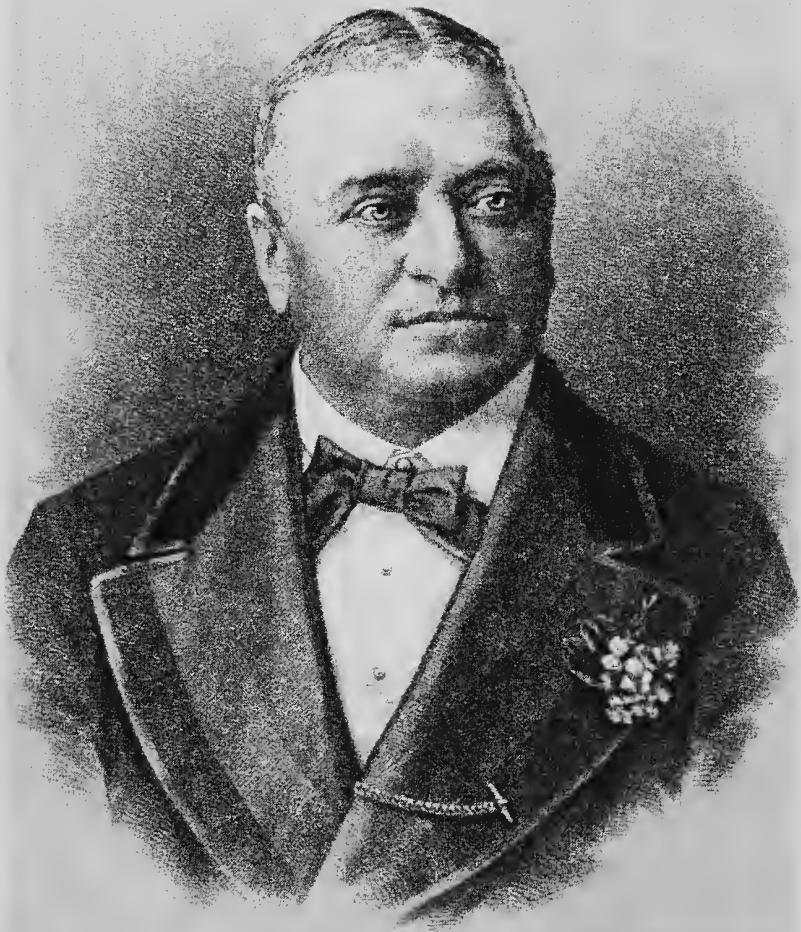
is ready to send 600 or 700 men fully equipped, consisting of a naval brigade and mounted infantry;" and Sir Arthur Blyth, agent-general for South Australia, received from the government at Adelaide a telegram on the 16th of February, saying, Please intimate to the imperial government that South Australia offers, at her own expense, to supply 250 infantry with officers for service in the Soudan. The reasons for our government declining these offers, and yet (though tardily, it must be confessed) making some effort to express to our kin beyond the sea the deep heart-stir that their prompt and genuine good-fellowship caused among the English people were not misinterpreted. The telegram sent by the Victorian premier ended by saying, "Federal action for the formation of an Australian contingent has been suggested, and correspondence on this head is now passing between the colonies." Suggested! The message flashed along the wire might with advantage have gained some electric force on its passage, for the suggestion had run like fire, and the warm and generous pulses of our Australian countrymen were beating in unison with our own. In the forefront of the movement was the Honourable William Bede Dalley, attorney-general of New South Wales, who in the absence through illness of the premier, the Honourable Alexander Stuart, was acting as colonial secretary. With an energy and enthusiasm which would have commanded a warm response even under less earnest and eager conditions of loyalty and genuine love for the mother country, he had already stirred the kindling ardour of the Australasian colonies, and on the 17th February sent to London the message: "Munificent contributions from colonists in favour of Patriotic Fund daily being made; numbers of wealthy colonists offer £1000 a year while colonial contingent is engaged. Contingent leaves March 3, consisting of 212 artillerymen, 200 horses, and 522 infantry."

The idea of forming an Australian contingent to help the British forces in the Soudan had doubtless been entertained some time before the offer was made and the preparations had commenced; but the first public expression of it was attributed to Sir Edward Strickland, who had been long associated with the colony

of New South Wales, and who was himself a military officer in days when there was no organized colonial force. He was well acquainted with the intensity of public feeling in the colony, especially after the departure of Gordon for Khartûm, when every item of news from Egypt and the Soudan was discussed with keen interest; and when the intelligence of Gordon's death reached Sydney Sir Edward wrote a letter which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in which he pointed out that a grand opportunity was then offered to Australia of proving, by a graceful, a loyal, and generous act, that she yielded not to any portion of the British Empire in loyalty and affection towards the mother country. Sir Edward may be said to have preached a crusade against "the war-like brave Saracens led by the Mahdi and fighting under all the savage influences of fanaticism, . . . learning the art of modern military strategy and acquiring arms and artillery and a knowledge how to use them."

To the general sentiment evoked by the intelligence of the death of Gordon he appealed in stirring terms, and the proposal which he made that a regiment 1000 strong, composed of recruits from all the Australian colonies, should "be raised as speedily as possible and be placed at the service of her Majesty the Queen to aid her troops already engaged in bitter war both in North and South Africa, or to supply the place at home of those drilled battalions sent out to reinforce their comrades on the field," was eagerly discussed. This, however, would have demanded a considerable time for the communications between the several colonies for the purpose of organizing the force, and, as we have seen, the British government was unwilling to incur the responsibility of accepting a force which would probably reach Egypt only to be in cantonments till the cool weather enabled the army to resume operations.

The members of the New South Wales ministry had already determined to bring the offer of a contingent to an immediate issue, and on the day that Sir Edward Strickland's letter appeared an extraordinary cabinet council was held at the office of the colonial secretary to consider a minute written by Mr. Dalley on



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the subject. In this minute it was stated that Mr. Dalley had already conferred with Colonel Richardson, the colonel-commandant of the forces in New South Wales, and with Colonel Roberts, the officer commanding the N. S. W. artillery, commonly known as the Permanent Force. From Colonel Richardson he ascertained that there would be no difficulty in raising a large body of trained and efficient infantry for the proposed service from among the volunteers of the country; and from Colonel Roberts he learned that two or three batteries of permanent artillery were available for active service. Mr. Dalley also saw Mr. Yuill, the local manager of the Orient steamship company, and ascertained from him that the means of transport could be obtained. This was a prompt movement, and as promptly the proposal was unanimously approved of by the cabinet, and the following cablegram was, at noon, despatched to Sir Saul Samuel, the agent-general of the colony in London:—

“The government offer to her Majesty’s government two batteries of its Permanent Field Artillery, with ten 16-lb. guns, properly horsed: also an effective and disciplined battalion of infantry 500 strong; the artillery will be under the command of Colonel Roberts, R.A.; the whole force under the command of Colonel Richardson, the commandant; and undertaking to land the force at Suakim within thirty days from embarkation. Reply at once.—W. B. DALLEY. 12th February, 1885.”

The object of the government in making this offer was explained by Mr. Dalley, as to testify the readiness of the Australian colonies to give instant and practical help to the empire in its emergency, conceiving that such a course could not be without a beneficial effect upon those who, in dealing adversely with the imperial interests, fail to recognize the esteem, the sympathy, and the adherence of the colonies. Pending the receipt of an answer from the imperial government, all the necessary arrangements were put in train, so that in the event of the offer being accepted active preparations might commence at once.

It may be said that promises of large money subscriptions began to be made directly the notion of an Australian contingent

to Egypt was made public. On the same day that Sir E. Strickland's letter appeared Mr. J. Hindson wrote to the newspapers offering a contribution of £200, and, though it was at first uncertain whether the British government would accept the proposal of New South Wales, other munificent offers followed, one of the first being that of Mr. W. H. Halliday, a wealthy "squatter" of Brooking, who offered a contribution of £1000 a year for as long as the Australian force was engaged in assisting the imperial army in Egypt. Many other proposals immediately followed, accompanied by encouraging letters to Mr. Dalley expressing sympathy and approval for the course taken by the government. Among them were letters from Mr. Daniel Cooper, the eldest son of Sir Daniel Cooper, Bart., inclosing cheque for £1000; another from Mr. James Fairfax offering £1000 a year for three years if necessary (a subsequent letter from the same gentleman contained £1000 on behalf of his brother, Mr. E. R. Fairfax, who was in England); an offer of £1000 a year from the *Evening News* to the patriotic fund, and numerous contributions of £100 and smaller sums, beside offers to supply valuable contributions in kind. The generous impulse continued, and it soon became evident that there would have been no difficulty in obtaining double the number of volunteers who were selected to form the contingent, and double the amount necessary to equip and provision them. Mr. Thomas Walker of Concord sent £1000, Mr. W. B. Levy of West Maitland wrote offering £1000 a year to be used as Mr. Dalley might think fit; subsequently Mr. J. Dyson offered £2000 a year for two years, and the smaller sums of £100 and under came in as though some good investment had been opened by the government; while the quantities of goods and provisions offered could scarcely have been received but for the promptitude with which Messrs. Maiden Hill and Clarke gave up their great wool-store on the Circular Quay as a depôt for the stores intended for the expedition.<sup>1</sup> A larger number of volunteer officers than would

<sup>1</sup> The author has to acknowledge his indebtedness to the excellent account of the organization of the expedition published by the Southern Cross Publishing Company, Pitt Street, Sydney, for these and some other details.



be required had tendered their services to command the proposed battalion of infantry, and there was great enthusiasm among the men of the Permanent Force when they heard that they would probably be sent out, while from the recently-organized force of the naval artillery volunteers a large number came forward to offer their services.

On Saturday, the 14th, Mr. Dalley, with two of his colleagues, were present at a banquet at Burrowa given by the electors to their member, Mr. Slattery, and it was on his return journey that he received a telegram from the agent-general. This telegram, which had been sent on from Sydney to meet him, said: "Her Majesty's government accept with much satisfaction offer of your government, upon the understanding that the force must be placed absolutely under orders of general commanding as to duties upon which it will be employed. Force of artillery is greater than is required; only one battery accepted. Transport should call at Aden for orders. If your government prefer the immediate despatch of your contingent the war office does not desire to delay it. Press comment very favourably upon your splendid offer." This message, with those subsequently received stating that the offer had been accepted out of compliment to the colony, and that the queen had personally expressed her high appreciation of the generous and spontaneous offer of assistance from New South Wales to England, sustained the high pitch of enthusiasm already manifested, and not a moment was lost in preparing to select, organize, and equip the men who were to form the expedition from among the numbers eager to be enrolled. There was a temporary difficulty about the uniform of the infantry battalion, which was to be selected from the various regiments in the colony, and therefore presented some differences of appearance. The Volunteer Force had its own uniform, of course; but the uniform of the Permanent Force, though all scarlet, had various facings, and Colonel Richardson, who was to be in command, was of opinion that scarlet would not be very suitable for active service. It was debated whether a telegram should be sent to England for uniforms; but these matters always come right if

intelligence and prompt action are combined in solving any difficulty, and no real impediment was caused by the discussion. Horses thoroughly fit for the work of the campaign were easily obtained if they could be got together in time; but this duty also was placed in competent hands, and the formation of an ambulance corps and the important provision for a complete and efficient commissariat were undertaken with such energy and practical forethought that the whole force was rapidly formed, and a more compact and well-furnished contingent was perhaps never sent forth from any country in the world.

The New South Wales volunteer force is in reality what may be termed a volunteer militia, the volunteers having had a change made in their organization in 1878. The men are not accepted unless they come up to certain physical requirements, and, when enrolled, a certain number of attendances at drill is compulsory, and to these attendances a small payment is attached. Among other regulations it is required of them that they should undergo at least one week's continuous training in camp in the course of every year. This had been carried on for several years, and in this way the men had attained a knowledge of the interior economy of camp life, without which they would have been almost unfit for service in the field. Their commandant, Colonel Richardson, asserted that had they not had this training he would not have recommended them for service; and Colonel Richardson had a right to speak with authority, for he had had charge of the New South Wales forces since 1865. He joined the imperial army in 1854, having entered it by passing a direct examination at Sandhurst, and served with the 72d Highlanders at the siege of Sebastopol. In New Zealand, with the 12th Regiment, he went through the Maori wars of 1860-61 and 1863-64, during which period he was adjutant of the regiment. He had received Crimean, New Zealand, and Turkish medals. In February, 1865, he was appointed to the command of the New South Wales forces. In August, 1871, a regular force was formed, consisting of a battery of artillery, and two companies of infantry, but after that

time the infantry had been disbanded, and two more batteries substituted.

The arrangements for the despatch of the expedition were commenced in earnest on the morning of Monday, February 16. The staff officers Lieutenant-colonel Christie and Captain Mackenzie were in attendance at the regimental and brigade offices, and received many applications from persons desirous of serving with the expedition. The office was thronged by volunteers, officers of all grades, ex-volunteers, retired members of the imperial forces, and civilians anxious to tender their services; and the whole atmosphere of the place was warlike from morning to night. In the course of the morning 13 officers, 10 non-commissioned officers, 6 buglers, and 100 privates had been enrolled. A great many men who had formerly served in the imperial army proffered their services, and no less than 16 of these registered their names with the 1st Regiment. A man who had served 22 years in the imperial service, had been with his regiment in India, and held the honourable rank of colour-sergeant, registered his name and expressed his great desire to serve in the New South Wales force. Another soldier, who had served 17 years in the Cameronians, offered his services.

The question of remuneration was considered at a cabinet meeting held in the forenoon, and the following rates of pay were fixed:—Married men, 2s. 3*d.* daily pay, and 2s. 9*d.* per day deferred pay, or made payable to the wife, making 5s. per day pay, with allowance to the wife of 2s. per day, and 6*d.* per day for each girl in the family under 16, and 6*d.* per day for each boy under 14. Unmarried men were to receive 2s. 3*d.* daily pay, and 2s. 9*d.* deferred pay, which might be made payable to an order to parents or friends. These were the payments to gunners in the artillery and privates in the infantry; other ranks were to be paid in proportion, at rates to be subsequently notified. This scale, it will be seen, is far above the rate of pay given to the ordinary British soldier; but then it must be remembered that the men of New South Wales who volunteer for this service are of a class vastly superior to the “Tommy Atkins” class of the British line. It was arranged

during the day that the following should be the strength of the contingent:—Artillery: 1 field-officer, 1 captain, 3 subalterns, 1 staff-surgeon, 1 extra officer, 26 non-commissioned officers, 8 artificers, 3 trumpeters, 168 gunners and drivers—total, 212 men, with 172 horses; 21 carriages, 6 16-lb. guns, 4 ammunition-wagons, 1 spare gun-carriage, 1 forage-wagon, 1 store-wagon, 1 general-service wagon, 1 store-cart, 6 small-arm wagons, for carrying infantry ammunition, and 300 rounds of shot per gun. Infantry: Colonel Richardson, in command of the whole contingent, Lieutenant-colonel Christie, Captain Mackenzie, and a paymaster; 2 lieutenant-colonels, 2 majors, 3 captains, including an adjutant, 2 surgeons, 9 lieutenants, 4 staff-surgeons, 1 bugle-major, 4 colour-sergeants, 20 sergeants, 30 corporals, 8 buglers, 433 rank and file, making a total of 522 men in all, with 24 horses for the officers. This made a total force, both arms combined, of 734 men.

Telegrams were coming in from various places where there were volunteer corps, and the enrolment went rapidly on, the Central Station having been changed to the Victoria Barracks. There the men were examined, and took an oath of loyalty, each man signing an agreement containing particulars of his name, age, locality, social and physical condition, personal identity, &c., and promising willingness to serve in the contingent for one year or two years if required.

On Monday the 17th of February the steamship *Australasian* of the White Star Line, then in Sydney harbour, was offered to the government as a transport-ship. A London cablegram had stated that the duties of the troops would be principally to protect the navvies who were to be engaged in the construction of a railway from Suakim to Berber. But the news that perhaps gave the most general satisfaction was to the effect that Lord Wolseley had telegraphed from the Soudan to Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, expressing his pride and pleasure at commanding the colonial troops about to leave for the Soudan. It was also learned with pleasure that the British soldiers at Korti, the head-quarters of the commander-in-chief, were delighted at the news of the approaching arrival of troops from New South Wales.

Mr. Dalley was constantly busy, together with his colleagues, in making arrangements and expediting matters of detail. A telegram arrived from the agent-general, desiring to be informed, for the information of the war office, as to whether any reserve stores would be required; and also spare parts, accoutrements, and equipments, and if any reserve ammunition would be required; and also desiring that numbers and detailed particulars of the force going might be furnished. To this Mr. Dalley sent the following reply:

"Inform war office that we shall require no reserve stores; that we are providing spare parts of materials for repairs; that we are sending 300 rounds per gun, and 500 rounds per rifle. Battery of 6 guns, 212 men, 522 infantry, and 200 horses. Contingent leaves 3d March."

The enrolment of volunteers continued with unabated vigour, and a large number of applications was received from persons who appeared willing to give their services in any capacity so long as they might be allowed to accompany the expedition. Among these were many offers from ladies who desired to go out as ambulance nurses. It was, however, deemed advisable to decline these applications. It was decided that the clothing for the men should include the ordinary service uniform, and sea kits, which consisted of a jumper of blue cotton, a pair of serge trousers, cotton shirt, and pair of canvas slippers. Extra blucher boots were supplied, and the gaiters, which, with the water bottles, were ordered from home. As to the clothing for the artillery, Colonel Roberts decided that the kits were to be carried in what are known as bushmen's valises. By this means each pair of horses carried what was immediately required for three men. The driver's kit was to be placed in front of him, and the off horse would carry two extra kits. Colonel Roberts also suggested to the government that blue spectacles and bushmen's fly-veils should be issued to every man. The dress of the artillery was their ordinary blue serge Norfolk jacket, blue serge trousers, strapped for riding, and bushmen's leather gaiters. The service helmet was found to be heavy and very uncomfortable, and a light cork helmet appeared to be the best adapted for the climate.

The *Iberia* was to convey to Suakim 600 men, 26 officers, and 24 horses for infantry officers' mounts. The horse selection committee visited the various horse bazaars, and succeeded in purchasing good useful animals. The question of supplies had anxiously engaged the attention of Mr. F. A. Wright, the minister for works, for some time, and he forwarded to Mr. Dalley the following minute on the subject:—"I beg to submit to my honourable colleague, the acting colonial secretary, the following list of supplies required for the expeditionary forces to the Soudan, for both men and horses. The supplies for the troops are for six months, and for the horses 90 days, exclusive of the forage required for the transport. I have given the matter of providing for the men very careful consideration, being guided largely by the experience of our local officers, and by information gathered from the regulations and books issued by the Imperial service and by Lord Wolseley, and I have made, I think, ample provision for both men and horses. The climate is a hot one, and the troops may possibly be called upon to do hard work, and I have therefore dealt with them most liberally, as will be seen from the list inclosed. The daily supplies are in excess of the rations issued to the Imperial troops, but I do not think the scale I have submitted is an excessive one. There will be sufficient to supply the utmost wants of the men, while at the same time it will prevent undue extravagance:—Supplies required for the troops for the Soudan—750 men of all ranks, and 220 horses: rations estimated for troops, 180 days' supply; and forage for horses, 90 days' supply, and 40 days on transport. Daily rations:  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. bread or 1 lb. biscuit, and 1 lb. flour,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. fresh meat or 1 lb. of preserved meat, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. tea or coffee per day; 3 oz. sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. salt,  $\frac{1}{36}$  oz. pepper, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. mustard, 2 oz. rice, 1 oz. lime-juice, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. preserved vegetables; rum at discretion of officer, not more than one gill per day each. In addition, 1 lb. flour and 2 oz. currants or raisins per week. There will be thus required 53 tons of flour, 25 tons biscuit, 30 tons preserved meats, 2 tons tea and coffee, 11 tons sugar, 2 tons salt, 2 cwt. pepper, 1 ton mustard, 8 tons rice, 4 tons lime-juice, 30 tons preserved vegetables, 10 hogsheads rum, and

1 ton currants or raisins. For the 220 horses, 90 days' daily rations: 12 lb. hay, 10 lb. oats, and 33 lb. bran. While on transport, 40 days, 10 tons hay, 5 tons oats, and 5 tons bran. Total quantities: 146 tons hay, 242,000 bushels oats, equal to 110 tons, and 103,400 bushels bran, equal to 46 tons."

It would be quite impossible to describe the sustained enthusiasm and excitement which was manifested throughout the colony. The following account written at the time appeared in a colonial journal, and commencing by recording the reception of the telegrams from England already mentioned, said:

"Late on that Sunday night a grizzled old soldier, holding the rank of sergeant-major, lay quietly in bed, oblivious of the news that had arrived. Rat-a-tat-tat came a knock to the door. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he slowly turned out of bed and went to answer the call. A 'full private,' in his scarlet jumper, stood there stiff and straight as a post. 'Ordered to the front, Sergeant-major,' was the curt message. The sleep left the old veteran's eyes. He straightened himself, and, with every nerve thrilling through his body, answered, 'Ready!'

When next morning the announcement of the acceptance of our troops was published in official form, and the government called for volunteers, there was but one cry from north to south, from east to west—'Ready!' From little country villages hid away in the forest, from dusty towns out upon the parched plains, came pouring in telegrams in reply. 'We will send our five men,' cried a tiny settlement. 'We will send our twenty,' cried another. 'Here, take our hundred, and God bless the old land!' cried still another; and so the answers came. Old men whose legs were stiff found them grow lissome, as, their eyes brightening at the news, they cried, 'Hurrah for old England!' and offered to carry a gun in the regiment and spill their blood for mother land. Women, not only in our midst but from far-off colonies, said, 'Send us to nurse the wounded; let us play our part;' and young girls, as Elaine for Launcelot, sat down to work the standards to be carried in the war. And far and near, from the squatter in the back blocks to the merchant in the city, came rich gifts of money.

'Take this, and more we have to give,' they said. And those who gave not in money gave in kind. Depôts were formed, and one might laugh right heartily at some of the strange gifts that came pouring in, were it not that they were given with the heart to do something at this great time. In a couple of days chaos was reduced to order, and the work went on speedily and regularly, but the enthusiasm never flagged. It was no passing passion, but a deep-seated, firmly-rooted desire that filled men's hearts. We read—'The commandant has received with gratification and wonder the urgent appeals of staid business men, surrounded with families and many other ties, not to refuse them the privilege of serving the empire.' Old military officers, who had turned their swords into ploughshares, and had never dreamed of war again, brightened the dull metal of their cast-off uniforms, and buckling the belt around them, turned once more to war. Young men whose eyes had never seen the lands beyond the ocean, but who had the love of England with the life from their mother's breast, threw down the axe or the stock-whip, and came into the city to give their lives to the empire. It was a rich burst of chivalry that lifted men out of the life of every day into an atmosphere of generous emotion and exalted feeling. The excitement caused by the acceptance of the colonial offer of troops was no less great in the country than in the metropolis. Each day brought news of the departure of country volunteers for Sydney. The enthusiasm was manifested in all manner of ways. The volunteers were escorted by torchlight processions to the railway-stations, a patriotic address having been delivered on the way by the local mayor from the balcony of the chief hotel, which for the time became a fountain at which all quenched their thirst. Then, amid the hurrahs of the whole population, down to the babes in arms, the 'Soudan lads' took their seats in the carriages, the fife and drum bands striking up 'The girl I left behind me,' and with a final cheer that hid the sobs of many a wife, sister, or mother, the train moved off, and not till it was lost to sight did handkerchiefs cease to flutter or the cheering stop. The news was wired down the lines, and each station was crowded with people, who cheered the lads as they



passed through. Along the coast at the seaport towns the same hearty feeling manifested itself. Commanding officers of local corps delivered heroic speeches to the volunteers; ladies decorated them with ribbons of red, white, and blue; mayors made very vehement if not strictly grammatical orations, and poured out libations of strong liquor to the god Mars. Electric lights, blue lights, red lights, green lights, and every other sort of light were burned. Everybody wanted to shake hands with them; they were no longer referred to as men but as 'heroes;' they were glorified in the local newspapers, lauded by town-councils, and held up as patterns by rustic parsons. During these two exciting weeks there was no prouder boast of a mother than, 'My boy has gone to the war.'

The war office here undertook to send ammunition for artillery guns and to provide for conveyance of supplies, and also to take charge of the forage and the rations for the troops on the same scale as that adopted for the imperial forces. General Graham had intimated that the 16-pounder guns would be too heavy for the Soudan, and therefore the war office sent word that only horses and harness should be supplied, and that a 6-gun 9-pounder battery of 6-cwt. guns and ammunition and carriages complete would meet the company at Suakim.

This change prevented the necessity of sending Colonel Roberts with the expedition, much to that officer's regret. Colonel Spalding was in command of the artillery, and rapidly completed the effective arrangements, including a provision for a number of revolvers to be sent from England to meet the men on their arrival at Suakim, so that each man of the artillery might be armed with one of these weapons and a full supply of ammunition.

The ambulance corps attached to the expedition was as complete as the other departments; the officers were Surgeon-major Williams, and Surgeons Glanville and Proudfoot, with two non-commissioned officers, two dispensers, and twenty-four trained bearers, many of whom were experienced men in army hospital service. There were five ambulance wagons, fully fitted up on latest service principles, each wagon to carry seven wounded—two in front seat, two inside

on stretchers, so arranged that when in position but very little motion would be felt, and three on the back seat. There were two pharmacy and surgical wagons, fitted with instruments, drugs, and medical comforts, in such a way that each article was placed in boxes and drawers, which were lettered and numbered, so that the article could be at once procured. Two wagons were provided for carrying tents, both for hospital and operating; bedding, clothes, and reserve stores; two field wagons, fitted up to carry general hospital stores; one water-cart; 4 saddles, with saddlery complete, twenty-six horses, with harness complete, allowing for spare sets.

These details are mentioned to show how completely the Australian contingent was provided, and how the earnest sentiments of the colonists found quick and practical expression. There could be little doubt that the ready formation of this force was regarded both at St. Petersburg and at Berlin with very serious attention, and that it was accepted as a proof that imperial federation of British possessions was immeasurably more than a theory, and went infinitely beyond a mere political expression.

It was not to be expected that the "patriotic movement," as it was named, and the provision of the contingent in so short a time on the responsibility of the ministry and while the colonial parliament was not sitting, would be accepted without some opposition. In New South Wales and the other Australian colonies political feeling is as pronounced as it is in England and political contentions run high. It was soon evident, however, that the opposition was entirely overborne by the public sentiment, and that no attempt to carry an amendment to the resolution proposed in the legislative council approving the conduct of ministers in despatching the contingent, would be successful. Perhaps the most prominent opponent of the action of the ministry was Sir Henry Parkes, whose name may be said to have been associated with the history of the colony, and who had been premier many years before; but Sir Henry's notions seemed to be those which belonged to a high-and-dry period for which the public had little sympathy. At several meetings held in different parts of the colony for various political and public celebrations the conduct of the ministry was

heartily endorsed, and not only Mr. Dalley, who eloquently and earnestly supported and defended the action that he had been foremost to advocate, but other members of the government also, and even some of the most able and important members of the opposition, warmly accepted and applauded the exhibition of public spirit which had led to the practical recognition of the unity of the Australian colonies with Great Britain and the empire.

As early as the 20th of February the action of the ministry had been endorsed at a great patriotic meeting held in the exhibition building in Sydney. The assembly had been convened by the mayor at the requisition of a very large number of citizens for the purpose of expressing sympathy with the action of the government in offering to send troops from New South Wales to assist the British arms in the Soudan, and to provide funds for the patriotic purpose of assisting the relatives of those who were to go to assert in Egypt the honour and loyalty of the colony. It was estimated that at least 12,000 people were present at this great demonstration, and the proceedings were opened by the mayor, who read various letters offering subscriptions, some of which were from officers of corporation, railway, and other official departments, contributing a day's pay from their entire staff to the fund.

The resolution proposed by the chief-justice Sir James Martin and seconded by Sir Patrick Jennings, "That this meeting endorses the prompt and patriotic action of the government of this colony in placing at the disposal of the imperial government a contingent of troops for service in Egypt, and accords its hearty approval of the same," was carried with a great outburst of applause and by an overwhelming majority. It was held by the vast meeting that if the government had waited for the convocation of parliament before deciding on the expedition they would have been too late, and the result of the meeting was the formation of a committee to receive contributions for and to administer a patriotic fund.

Two ministers of religion were attached to the contingent. The Rev. H. J. Rose of Christchurch and St. John's, North Shore,

was appointed Church of England chaplain, and the Rev. C. F. Collingridge, chaplain of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Rose Bay, represented the Roman Catholics of the contingent.

On March 1st, the Sunday before the embarkation of the troops, special services were held in most of the churches and other places of worship. At the cathedral (St. Andrew's) an eloquent sermon, addressed to the men, was preached by the primate, Dr. Barry; and at St. Mary's, the Roman Catholic cathedral, Archbishop Moran addressed the Roman Catholic section of the contingent. At both churches the services were of a very special character, and the proceedings may be said to have been a fitting preparation for the departure of the troops. On Tuesday the 3d of March the contingent was prepared to embark.

The Victoria Barracks, from early morning till the march to the point of embarkation commenced, were thronged with people, and for the most part with people who had a special right to be present, in view of their relationship or friendship with soldiers and volunteers. The men going to the Soudan were nearly all in the highest spirits, and those who remained behind were fired with martial ardour to such an extent that had a single man chosen to go to Egypt suffered some accident which would have compelled him to stay at home, there would have been hundreds of volunteers for the vacant place. Before the troops marched there were several thousands of people within the barrack walls. Many a pathetic scene occurred, as wives, mothers, or sisters took what might be the last farewell of the brave fellows going out to fight for the land of their fathers, and here and there an affecting parting between lovers obtruded itself upon the gaze of the passer-by. The few hours before noon must have been very trying to the members of the contingent, distracted as they were from quietly making their final preparations by the crying of women and the fervent valedictions of friends; but there was no disorder, and when the signal was given to fall in it was promptly obeyed. At half-past eleven the men dined, and afterwards there was a short interval before they were paraded, and at this time the square presented a

phenomenal sight, the verandahs of the different buildings being packed with people, the walls half-covered, and the ground thronged with soldiers and civilians, the bright uniforms of the former contrasting with the tasteful costumes of the ladies who came to do them honour. A calm spirit dwelt over the scene, and all excitement was subdued until noon. Previous to that hour the men were formed into squads, and examined by Adjutant Bartlett and his subalterns, with a view to ascertain that each had his accoutrements and was prepared to proceed to the point of embarkation. They were afterwards dismissed. It would be difficult to realize a more orderly set of men being got together than were these men the colony was sending forth to the field. They fraternized with the visitors and chatted sociably with their comrades, and seemed as light-hearted as though they were entering upon an Easter encampment.

Suddenly the rattle of drums was heard, and the regular tramp of men accustomed to shoulder the rifle fell on the ear, and the sounds set the first great wave of excitement in motion, for it announced the period of the real business of the day. They came from the detachments from her Majesty's ships of war in the harbour, and as the gates were thrown wide open a body of pioneers marched in, heading 550 blue-jackets, marine artillery, and marine infantry. The band played one of the liveliest marches, and the men trooped in, and by their bearing, their physique, and the smartness of their dress, at once challenged and won general admiration. The detachments had in their charge two Gardner guns, two field-guns, and two Gatlings, and they made a stirring rattle as they quickly rolled these into their assigned positions. It fell to the lot of the squads in charge of the guns to clear a square in which the New South Wales troops might form into line, and much amusement was created by the impetuous sweep they gave the terrible instruments they were attached to. Another exciting sensation occurred when the newly-formed cavalry corps entered the square. Of this there were fifty members present, and they were under the command of Captain Macdonald. They rode splendid animals, and imparted an agreeable variety to the scene.

Lastly, a considerable number of mounted troopers, under Captain Battye, filed in, and their animals also were sources of much admiration on account of the bone and muscle they displayed, and their splendid symmetry. His excellency the governor drove to the ground in his carriage, and was accompanied by the Hon. W. B. Dalley, acting colonial secretary, Captain A. D. Loftus, A.D.C., and Mr. H. A. Unwin, private secretary. Amongst the other distinguished persons present were the Hon. J. S. Farnell, minister for lands; the Hon. F. A. Wright, minister for works; the Hon. G. R. Dibbs, colonial treasurer; Hon. W. J. Trickett, minister for instruction; the Hon. H. E. Cohen, minister for justice; the Hon. J. Norton, postmaster-general; the Hon. J. P. Abbott, minister for mines; Mr. E. Fosbery, inspector-general of police; Rear-admiral Tyron; General Scratchley, high commissioner for New Guinea; and Sir Edward Strickland. The crowd, which was exceedingly well behaved, was easily kept in order by Inspectors Anderson, Waters, Larkins, Lenthall, Lawless, Cotter, and M'Kay, and about sixty police under their charge.

The day was observed as a public holiday, and from the date on which the offer of the colony had been accepted, to the hour of the departure of the contingent, public enthusiasm had been maintained at its utmost tension. The number of volunteers had reached six times the required strength of the force, and there had been a continuous flow of contributions in money and kind from all quarters, so that the patriotic fund on the 3d of March amounted to £45,000. On the Saturday the troops had been reviewed by Lord Augustus Loftus, the governor, in the presence of 50,000 spectators, and now the streets forming the line of route from the barracks to the Circular Quay, a distance of two miles, were lined by immense numbers of spectators assembled from all parts and forming a dense mass. The troops were escorted by the sailors and marines from the men-of-war, and by all the available local forces, and were accompanied by the governor, the ministers, and the principal officials of the colony. The procession formed an imposing spectacle, and the popular enthusiasm was unbounded, the progress of the contingent being greeted with loud cheers and

the frequent expression of good wishes from the assembled multitude.

The mounted police did their best to keep a clear passage for the troops, but they did not accomplish their object one half so successfully as the tars did; they literally carried everything before them. On they marched and the crowd fell back on either side almost instantaneously. Those who did not get out of the way were quietly hustled along until they were glad to creep to the rear of the crowds that lined the streets, and repent of their folly in endeavouring to stem the living torrent which swept on in such magnificent array. Looking down Oxford Street, the spectacle was simply bewildering. Long lines of streamers and gay-coloured flags stretched across the thoroughfare, and every coign of vantage was closely packed with human beings. Balconies, verandahs, and housetops were covered with spectators, many of whom threw choice bouquets on the moving column beneath them. The Soudan contingent was especially favoured in the matter of floral decorations, and many of the fair occupants of the balconies showered rice and ribbons upon the heroes of the day. Some of the volunteers appeared to be much affected by these demonstrations of good-will, and many a brave fellow's eye moistened as he glanced for the last time on the loved form of mother, sister, or sweetheart. The members of the contingent quickly transferred the flowers to their button-holes and belts, while some fixed them on the points of their bayonets. In this manner they marched on with a swinging step to the well-worn tune of "The Girl I left behind me." Many of the ladies who had stationed themselves along the line of march were deeply affected by the stirring scene, and not a few of them kissed the young soldiers as they passed by. Others wished them "God speed" with a trembling voice, and some there were who smiled approvingly on the men of the contingent, and bade them be of good cheer. Cries of "Bravo, boys!" "Give it to the Mahdi!" and "Advance Australia!" were of frequent occurrence. One balcony at the lower end of Oxford Street was crowded with ladies, and these also showered down a profusion of flowers upon the blue-jackets, marines, and the

contingent. On passing the Cambridge Club Hotel several bags of rice, evidently meant as an expression of good-will towards the men who were going to the Soudan, were emptied from the lofty balconies of the building on to the crowds below, and hearty cheering followed this token of good feeling. Just at this spot the crowd was very great, and right along College Street the spectators were formed up in dense masses on either side of the procession. The sloping banks of Hyde Park were covered by an immense concourse of people, who cheered enthusiastically as the contingent passed by; and Mr. Dalley and Mr. Dibbs were frequently applauded. Appropriate mottoes were displayed at intervals along Oxford and College Streets, amongst them being two bearing the inscriptions "Strike for Victory!" and "God Speed!" The latter also bore a representation of the Southern Cross. Turning into Park Street the scene was an exceedingly pretty and animated one. Dense crowds lined the thoroughfare, and vast multitudes were assembled inside the railings of the park. The foliage of the trees, together with the bunting and the gay-coloured costumes of the ladies, produced a charming effect. The standards carried in the midst of the naval contingent also added to the effect of the spectacle.

On reaching the quay the men formed square and were addressed by the governor as follows:—

"Soldiers of New South Wales,—I have considered it my duty, as the representative of her Majesty, to say a few words to you at this solemn moment before your embarkation. For the first time in the great history of the British Empire a distant colony is sending, at its own cost and completely equipped, a contingent of troops, who have volunteered with an enthusiasm of which only we who witnessed it can judge, to assist the imperial forces in a bitter struggle for the suppression of unspeakable cruelty and for the establishment of order and justice in a misgoverned country.

Countless as have been the occasions when the blood and treasure of England have been poured out freely to protect the feeble, to shield the defenceless, or to maintain right, there has never been one in which humanity has been more deeply interested







in the triumph of the arms of England than the cause which you have heroically resolved to uphold by your valour.

You will be greeted in Egypt by the ready welcome of thousands of chivalrous soldiers who have never yet looked upon such an action as yours. The eyes of your gracious Queen will be bent upon your exertions; and in every part of the world where our flag floats men, women, and children will eagerly read of your exploits and pray for your success.

Soldiers! you carry in your keeping the honour of this great colony, which has made such splendid sacrifices in order to send you to the front with an equipment of which the nations most practised in war might have been proud. You will have the glorious privilege of helping to maintain the honour of the empire. In your ranks are numbers who are voluntarily leaving the paths of fortune, worldly advantages, the comforts of home, and the sweetness of domestic life for heroic service in a bloody war, in which already many brave men have been stricken down. You are doing this to show to the world the unity of the mighty and invincible empire of which you are members.

Your country charges itself with the care of the dear ones you leave behind, and all that generosity, tenderness, and gratitude can do to care for them and to succour and console them will be looked upon as a labour of love by the nation."

His excellency, in bidding farewell to the men, said:—"Our earnest hope is that it may be your glorious privilege to share in the triumph as in the service, and that you will come back to us crowned with England's gratitude as you are now encompassed with her sympathies."

The commandant (Colonel Richardson) saluted his excellency, and delivered the following reply:—"My Lord,—On behalf of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers of the contingent, I beg to return my sincere thanks for the inspiring and kind address which you have given to us this day. If anything were wanting to complete our loyalty to her Majesty the Queen, it has been done by your lordship's speech this afternoon, for every man who has volunteered in this service is determined to do his duty,

not only to her Majesty the Queen, but for the honour of the colony. I again thank you on behalf of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men."

The speech of Colonel Richardson was followed by loud and repeated cries of "Mr. Dalley;" but the acting colonial secretary did not respond, that gentleman's reason for failing to address the assemblage being that on the occasion of the departure of the contingent for the scene of war they should not be addressed by any others than the representative of the queen and their commandant.

The contingent then marched on board the transports, the infantry and most of the artillery embarking on the *Iberia*, which took 600 of the men, the remaining 200, together with the horses and stores, being conveyed on board the *Australasian*.

Enthusiastic cheers arose from the quay as the vessels steamed away to the Heads, accompanied by a perfect fleet of steamers, all flying their gayest bunting. The scene was brilliant and impressive as the steamers moved off amidst the resounding cheers of the vast concourse of people: the fluttering of handkerchiefs, the waving of flags: the music of the bands and the firing of signal guns. It was an occasion never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

His excellency the governor despatched a telegram to her Majesty the Queen, on the afternoon of the departure of the troops, in the following words:—"The Queen, Windsor Castle, England. Sydney contingent of 800 men, 224 horses, sailed to-day; great demonstration; immense enthusiasm, with intense loyalty to your Majesty. (Signed) GOVERNOR." To which Lord Augustus Loftus received the following answer from her Majesty:—"Greatly gratified by your account of the departure of the contingent and enthusiasm displayed by my loyal subjects." His excellency also received, in reply to a telegram sent to the Duke of Cambridge, the following telegram from his grace:—"Thanks for your telegram, and congratulate yourself and the colony on the loyal spirit evinced, which I highly appreciate."

The latest despatch in the correspondence was a telegraphic one

from Lord Derby to Sir W. Robinson, dated the 4th inst., saying:—  
“Her Majesty’s government are carefully considering patriotic offer of troops. While disposal of further contingents during summer heat in Soudan would be most difficult to arrange, if a colony, either independently or acting jointly with others, can despatch force in August to arrive in Egypt in September, her Majesty’s government will most gladly receive it. Desirable to know early probable number, description, and previous training of force; also whether advisable to supply from home any officers and non-commissioned officers experienced in field. Important, if possible, each colonial contingent should drill together during month or more before embarking. Early answer valuable. Send copy Governor of Victoria, Governor of Queensland.”

A meeting was held at the war office on the 3d of March, the day of the departure of the Australian contingent, between the agents-general of the Australian colonies and the official representatives of the colonial and war departments. The meeting was attended by the secretary of state for war, the secretary of state for the colonies, his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, Lieutenant-general Sir A. Alison (adjutant-general), the Earl of Morley (parliamentary under-secretary of state for war), and Sir Robert Herbert, K.C.B. (permanent under-secretary of state for the colonies). The colonies were represented by Sir Saul Samuel, K.C.M.G. (agent-general for New South Wales), Sir Arthur Blyth, K.C.M.G. (agent-general for South Australia), Mr. Robert Murray Smith, C.M.G. (agent-general for Victoria), and the Hon. J. F. Garrick (agent-general for Queensland). The object of the meeting was to obtain information as to the colonial contingents whose services had been offered to her Majesty’s government, and to discuss the conditions under which they should be employed in the autumn operations in the Soudan.

Early in February it had been determined, that while the river column, under General Brackenbury, should push on that it might co-operate in attack on Berber with the troops of the desert column that were to be reinforced by the contingent under

General Redvers Buller at Abu-Kru, a strong force of all arms should be sent out to Suakim to crush Osman Digma. Thus the power of the Mahdi and of his lieutenant would be destroyed at about the same time, and a junction of the forces might be effected by the construction of the railway line to Berber and the complete clearance of the desert route.

The Hospital and Commissariat corps were to sail from Southampton on Feb. 17; 20th Hussars, from Portsmouth, probably Feb. 19; 5th Lancers, from Kingstown, Feb. 20; Royal Engineers and Commissariat, Feb. 18; Woolwich, ordnance stores and provisions, Feb. 17; mules and camels were to start at once from Alexandria. Three battalions of guards from Albert Docks on Feb. 18th; medical stores and detachments of Army Hospital Corps, Feb. 18; Woolwich, ordnance stores, Feb. 18; Dorset Regiment, from Gravesend, Feb. 18; 2d Battalion Dublin Fusiliers were to leave Gibraltar early, and water-condensing machinery, and water-tanks were rapidly being prepared for immediate despatch.

Lieutenant-general Sir Gerald Graham, V.C., K.C.B., was appointed to the important command of the expedition to open up the Suakim-Berber route and to co-operate with Lord Wolseley's force. Brevet Major-general Fremantle was appointed to command the brigade of guards ordered to Egypt; and Major-general Greaves received the appointment of chief of the staff, a position corresponding with that held by General Adye under Lord Wolseley in the Egyptian campaign of 1882. General Fremantle, who had held the command at Suakim for some time previously, had reconnoitred much of the ground to be traversed, and was considered eminently qualified for the important command of the brigade of guards. Major-general Hudson had the command of the Indian contingent, and would have control of three thousand men.

On the 19th of February the 3d Battalion of Grenadier Guards were inspected by the queen in the quadrangle of Windsor Castle previous to their departure for the Soudan, and she addressed the officers in a short and encouraging speech, which was afterwards

repeated to the corps by the colonel. The same evening Lieutenant-general Sir Gerald Graham had an audience with her Majesty, of whom he took leave before his departure for the Soudan.

Preparations for sending a considerable force (about 7000 men) with all the materials for constructing the railway and for maintaining a campaign continued, although the reserves were not called out until nearly a month afterwards; but by that time it had become evident that the plan of procedure would have to be changed.

Operations against the hostile tribes of Osman Digma were to be carried on vigorously, but there was little or no probability that any movement could be made against the Mahdi's forces at Berber either by the desert route and Metammeh, or by the Nile and Abu Hamed: for after the removal of the sick and wounded from the camp at Abu-Kru to Abu-Klea, General Buller had found his position untenable against the swarming forces of the Mahdi coming from Khartûm and Berber, and had retired with the whole force—his own troops and the remains of the desert column. At about the same time General Brackenbury, with his Nile column had gone through the Shukook Pass, had reached Salamat, where they destroyed the whole of the property of the treacherous Suleiman Wad Gamr, the murderer of Colonel Stewart and his party; had gone on to Hebbah, the scene of the murder itself, and thence to the end of the Monassir country, and almost within touch of Abu Hamed, when a message of recall reached him from Korti, in which General Wolseley informed him of the evacuation of Gubat, the retirement of General Buller to Abu-Klea, and the abandonment of all hope of going to Berber before the beginning of the autumn campaign.

On the 12th of February Sir R. Buller ordered the departure of the wounded from the camp at Abu-Kru to Abu-Klea with an escort of 300 men from the three camel regiments, and the start was made on the following morning, the most severely wounded men being carried in litters by Egyptian bearers. Sir Herbert Stewart was the first to be conveyed on this mournful procession,

and he was so sadly altered in appearance, that though he was able to recognize those around him, very little hope could have been entertained of his recovery. Colonel Talbot was in command of the escort; and the scouts who went forward to act as guides through the bush could find no signs of the enemy though there was a great sound of tom-toms in Metammeh, from which it was reported that a force had gone out soon after the convoy and the wounded had started. By 11 o'clock the convoy had reached to within four miles of the end of the scrubby bush, beyond which the country lay open all the way to Abu-Klea. Preparations were made for breakfast, when a report came in from Lieutenant Dawson, who commanded the scouting party, that the bush was full of the enemy's cavalry and spearmen. The column was at once re-formed; the guards and marines under Captain Pearson advanced with their camels 200 yards into the bush, where, as they were under fire, they dismounted and formed square, the heavy camel regiment being in square in front, the mounted infantry in rear of the convoy, which was guarded in flanks by the Egyptians. The bullets from the enemy fell thick and fast into the little square of about ninety men, the enemy being invisible because of the thick bush. Except a glimpse now and then of a horse or a spear, there was nothing for our men to fire at in return, and the situation was exceedingly perilous, when they received an order from Colonel Talbot to retire to the main body, as they might otherwise be cut off by the surrounding enemy. It was a critical moment; for to retire at once would be to leave the camels with the men's kits and ammunition; but in a quarter of an hour volunteers—one man to six camels—had offered to lead the animals, while the rest with the wounded had to halt every few paces to fire volleys into the bush whence the concealed enemy kept up a galling fire, and were expected every moment to make a rush upon the small retiring force. So close were the Arabs that while Lieutenant Dawson was carrying one of his wounded men, another poor fellow was shot in the back and fell at his feet, and not only was smoke coming from the bullet hole, but his coat and hair were on fire. The officer stopped and pressed out the



fire, but the man died almost directly. On reaching the main body of the convoy and forming square on the left front with the heavy camel regiment, the mounted infantry forming square on the right rear, the force waited expecting a charge from the Arabs, who were howling and yelling their signals for assembling for attack. The mounted infantry were firing volleys, and the faint sound of some bugles was supposed to come from their direction, so that when the men of the left front caught sight of troops moving past an opening in the scrub at about 700 yards distance, they were brought to the "present," and would have fired had not the officer with his field-glass discerned that there were helmets, and a few minutes afterwards Colonel Brabazon of the hussars rode forward with the good news that the light camel regiment, about 300 strong, under Colonel Stanley Clarke, had come up from Abu-Klea *en route* for Gubat.

The Arabs soon decamped on the arrival of this reinforcement, none of the men of which had been injured though the troops in the rear of the convoy had fired a couple of volleys at them, mistaking them for the enemy, as they passed through the dense bush. It was quite impossible to tell what was the force of the Arabs, nor could any one see in what direction they retreated. Our troops were, however, able to march in extended order till they got clear of the scrub, and after halting for the night, started off early on the morning of the 14th for Abu-Klea, and arrived there before noon. From Abu-Klea the wounded started next day for Gakdul, but they had scarcely left before General Buller and the whole force from Gubat marched in. The uncertainty which had been felt as to the prosecution of the enterprise against Metammeh and Berber was now at an end, and it was known that operations had been abandoned. General Buller had remained at Gubat for some time making demonstrations designed to induce the Mahdi's army there to come out and fight; but though there was evidently a great muster of forces, and much noise and tomtomming, they made no active response; the demonstration, however, kept their attention absorbed while the camp at Abu-Kru was broken up and everything that could not be carried away was

destroyed before the entire force marched out. This was all the more difficult from the fact that for some days small outpost skirmishes had been of frequent occurrence. The enemy was receiving guns and reinforcements from Khartûm, and the neighbouring tribes had received the commands of the Mahdi to assemble for the purpose of attacking the British force. The enemy's videttes were visible across the river, and the Arabs were gradually closing around our camp. Deserters from Metammeh, some of whom were escaped Egyptian soldiers, reported that the enemy there, on the 8th of February, were reinforced by 500 men from Khartûm. They had little food. Their total strength was 4000 men, with three guns.

But our force at Abu-Kru was actively employed, and gave the enemy little peace. Lord Charles Beresford made daily trips up or down the river, going five or ten miles in the steamer *Safa* to prevent the enemy from fortifying the bank, and to secure supplies. A company of British soldiers and 200 of General Gordon's men accompanied these expeditions. Upon the 7th our men made a successful reconnaissance, and destroyed a well-made unoccupied fort to the north-east of Metammeh. The same day a foraging party secured twenty-five cattle and a number of sheep and goats on the south-west bank. On the 8th, seven miles up, our men saw another fort, and secured several hundred goats, besides wood and supplies.

It was evident, however, that for so small a force to attempt to take and hold Metammeh, or to hold the camp on the Nile bank at Abu-Kru, would be futile now that Khartûm had fallen and the Mahdi's followers were swarming down. The total evacuation of the camp and the retirement of the force from Gubat was therefore a necessary as well as a skilful manœuvre, however disappointing to the men of that desert column which had fought its way to the Nile and had hoped soon to deliver the captives at Khartûm. It was something under such adverse circumstances to be able to retire upon Abu-Klea with a feeling of confidence that no force that the Mahdi could bring would be able successfully to resist the return of the column which might have now to fight its way back.

Abu-Klea was a difficult and dangerous place for a small force to hold against the host of the enemy, for, as we have seen, the seriba was on low or level ground surrounded by hills, the occupation of which could only be effected by a considerable number of troops, while the enemy concealed amidst the heights could keep up a constant, deadly, and harassing fire from their long-range rifles. As a large force of the Arabs had followed General Buller on the march they were able to take up a threatening position around his camp at Abu-Klea, where he was compelled to avoid a general engagement. Even if he could have stimulated the enemy to come out and fight he could not risk adding to the number of the wounded, for he had so few camels that he was compelled to wait for the return of those that had gone on with the convoy to Gakdul on the 15th.

Alas, on the day following their departure (the 16th February), just as that convoy came to a halt at the end of the day's march, the general who had led the desert column from Korti passed into the silent land. For some time it had been feared—had been expected—that the effects of the wound he had received must be fatal, and he had himself felt from the first that he would not live to reach England. All that was mortal of the brave and beloved general was carried to Gakdul on the 17th of February, and on the afternoon of that day his grave was made in the solitude of the desert, where his body was laid by his sorrowing comrades and with military honours, amidst a scene so impressive that it was not to be forgotten by any of those who were present.

The following despatch was sent by Lord Wolseley to the secretary of state for war:—"Korti, February 22, 1885.—My Lord,—I have the honour to forward herewith Colonel Talbot's report of the death of Major-general Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., an event which has deprived her Majesty of one of her bravest soldiers and most brilliant leaders, and has caused amongst all ranks of the army of the Soudan the most genuine and heart-felt sorrow. Few commanders have succeeded to a greater degree than Sir Herbert Stewart in winning the affection of those who served with or under him, whilst his many and high military

qualities rendered him a general whom England could ill afford to spare. His death is felt by all here at once as a private and a national loss. Leaders such as he was are rare in all armies. It may be long before the service or the country can fill the gap which his death has caused." Colonel Talbot said in his report:—"I beg to be allowed to express the deep grief of all ranks who have had the privilege of serving under this distinguished officer, especially of those who have so lately followed him into action, and also their sense of the great loss which they, the army generally, and the country, have sustained."

When Lord Wolseley's despatch announcing Stewart's death was read to the House of Lords, the Duke of Cambridge and the Earl of Morley added their testimony to that of Lord Wolseley and Colonel Talbot, to the high worth of the deceased officer, and to the painful regret felt at his loss. Lord Wolseley had written: "No braver soldier or more brilliant leader of men ever wore the queen's uniform. England can ill afford the loss of this young general, while his death robs me of the services of a dear friend and of a dear comrade." Lord Wolseley's opinion of Sir Herbert Stewart was well known. In the previous year some one expressed a doubt as to whether Stewart would arrive in time at Suakim. "Time!" said Lord Wolseley, who overheard the remark; "Stewart will be in time if he has to put to sea in nothing better than a cockle-boat."

The deceased general was not more remarkable for his bravery and resolution than for his intelligence. He was thoroughly conversant with all the details of his profession. He possessed a very remarkable knowledge of military history, and could describe the main events of almost any battle of importance on which he was questioned, and he was especially conversant with the battles of the Franco-Prussian war. When he was in India he was employed at a station in Bengal during a severe epidemic of cholera, and he had often stated that during that period he was in greater danger than in any campaign in which he was afterwards engaged.

Sir Herbert Stewart had a very remarkable faculty, not only

for performing varied and difficult duties, but for winning the confidence and regard of those under his command. His career had been as honourable as it was active, and his comrades in arms had a sincere affection for him as a brave, simple, kindly gentleman, and at the same time as a dashing and brilliant cavalry officer.

Major-general Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., born on June 30th, 1843, was eldest son of the Rev. John Edward Stewart, rector of Sparsholt, Hampshire, and was a great-grandson of the seventh Earl of Galloway. His mother was daughter of the late Charles John Herbert, of Muckcross, county Kerry. He was educated at Winchester College,<sup>1</sup> and entered the army as ensign in the 37th Regiment (now the Hampshire) in 1863. It is not generally known that Stewart was at one time intended for the bar, that he kept all his terms and ate all his dinners, but in the end abandoned that life for a military career. He was gazetted lieutenant in 1865 and captain in 1868. For two years from this time he acted as aide-de-camp to the major-general commanding the Bengal Presidency, and the year following as deputy-assistant quartermaster-general in Bengal. In 1873 he joined the 3d Dragoon Guards, on the lists of which regiment his name now stands as major. In 1878 he passed the Staff College and served as brigade major in the Zulu war of 1879, and was present at the affair of Erzugayan. He was specially employed on the lines of communication after the breaking up of the cavalry brigade, and for his services here he was mentioned in Colonel Russell's report, with brevet rank as major, which rank he gained substantively in 1882. He served as principal staff officer to the Transvaal field force in the operations against Secocoeni, and as military secretary and chief of the staff to Sir Garnet Wolseley, and in this capacity he gained further mention in despatches and his brevet of lieutenant-colonel, together with a medal and clasp. In 1881 he went to South Africa on special service, and was assistant adjutant and

<sup>1</sup> Only a few days before writing these lines the author was sitting at dinner next to a friend who had been Herbert Stewart's junior and "fag" at Winchester. This gentleman on referring to the deceased general spoke of him in terms of earnest admiration and affection, saying, that everybody liked him, that he was one of those who seemed born to influence, if not to command others by a kind of personal charm, and that all the juniors were pleased to do anything for him.

quartermaster-general in the Boer war, for which he was again mentioned. After the battle of Majuba Hill Stewart returned to England, and became aide-de-camp to Earl Spencer at the anxious period when the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish caused such a deep throb of indignation in the country.

One of the earliest appointments made on the organization of the army for the first Egyptian war was that of Stewart as staff officer to Sir Drury Lowe, who was to command the cavalry division, and Stewart was one of Wolseley's most active and trusted counsellors in making the preparations for the expedition. He distinguished himself at Tel-el-Kebir, and took part in General Drury Lowe's brilliant ride through the desert to Cairo. When the Egyptians sent out a white flag to meet the advancing British force, it was Stewart who, at the head of one hundred lancers and dragoons, demanded and received the surrender of the citadel. Stewart had left Ireland to take part in the Egyptian war, and after the battle of Tel-el-Kebir and the occupation of Cairo he returned to Dublin to resume a position on Lord Spencer's staff; but the Egyptian campaign was not over, and when General Graham went to Suakim Stewart went with him, and displayed excellent soldierly qualities at Tamasi. At the latter battle his horsemen had a great share in retrieving the fortunes of the day, when the first square broke beneath the Arab charge. He then received the rank of K.C.B.

We have already seen with what spirit and energy he entered upon the difficult duty of commander of the desert column, which he led to the victory that proved fatal to himself. It was understood that Lady Stewart was on her way to Egypt to nurse her wounded husband when the sad news of his death reached this country.

A considerable force of the enemy assembled, as was expected, around Abu-Klea, and kept up a distant but galling fire upon the camp of General Buller's column. Captains Walsh and Paget of the mounted infantry, Quartermaster Jamieson of the Royal Irish, and Surgeon O'Neill of the medical staff were wounded. The enemy's cavalry and a large number of riflemen continued

scouting round the camp, the riflemen afterwards crossing to the hills to the east and north-east of the seriba, whence they kept up a continuous fire at long range, by which two men were killed and fourteen wounded. This was on the 16th of February, and the condition of affairs continued for some days. During that time it was necessary to deepen the wells, and such numbers of the enemy were marching at no great distance that it was thought necessary to wait for the return of the guards' camel division, and the mounted infantry, who had been sent to Gakdul with the convoys of wounded. The position of General Buller at Abu-Klea was apparently safe from attack by the enemy, who, numerous as they were, had no relish for a fight with the victors of Abu-Klea and Gubat. On one occasion a large body of the Arabs made a move northward, probably for the purpose of ascertaining the strength and composition of the convoy from Gakdul, which was then on its way back to the camp, but finding the route occupied by a chain of our pickets and some of our scouting parties they returned to the place from which they had started rather than come to close quarters.

The increasing number of the enemy made it evident that had an attack been made upon Metammeh it would have been at a very heavy loss, which would have left the already diminished column (had the town been taken) in a state of siege and cut off from their communications by the surrounding enemy, while the advance of the Mahdi would have ensured the rising of the tribes, and would thus have rendered it almost impossible to maintain communication across the desert. As it was, the retirement of General Buller with the column to Abu-Klea had been effected without molestation from the enemy, and it soon became known by message from Korti that on the first opportunity the return should be completed by a march to Gakdul, which could only be made slowly, as the camels were already pretty well exhausted, and the greater part of the troops would have to go on foot.

The Arabs seem to have made some attempt to resort to their treacherous artifices, for on the 20th a white flag was seen to be flying in their camp, and this flag was soon made out to be, not

a banner, but a (probably false) signal of truce. Captain Pigott with the mounted infantry approached the camp, which he found had been evacuated by the Arabs, who had left the flag behind, a letter being attached to the flagstaff. This communication bore neither date nor signature, but stated that two of the Mahdi's lieutenants desired to communicate with the general commanding the British army. The letter was answered by General Buller, who demanded to know what proposals the Mahdi's lieutenants had to make, as he could not enter into communication with them without knowing what was their object. On taking back this reply, however, Captain Pigott's party was fired upon (possibly by Arabs who were unacquainted with the object of their advance), and was finally obliged to return to camp without having been able to deliver the letter. During the remainder of the day and the greater part of the day following nothing of moment occurred, but on the next evening it was discovered that the Arabs were returning to their camp. Accordingly a fresh attempt to parley was made by Major Kitchener, who, it was said, held a short colloquy with the enemy, but nothing came of it. He was, however, not interfered with by them, but returned to camp without mishap. Major Wardrop returned to Abu-Klea from Gakdul the same evening, bringing with him despatches for General Buller, which recalled the force to Gakdul and settled the question of further operations.

It was believed that the rebels in their camp amidst the hills were not well provided with food or water, and that they were compelled to send at intervals to Metammeh for necessary supplies; and after the episode of the white flag and the return to their camp there was a temporary lull. The convoy again started for Gakdul with about thirty wounded officers and men—many of them very seriously injured—and with them Gordon's black troops from Khartûm, who were willing either to fight or to do duty as bearers.

A correspondent who accompanied the convoy for some distance paid a brief visit to the scene of the first battle of Abu-Klea, and describes it as presenting a horrible spectacle:—"The desert for nearly a mile was strewn with the bodies of the



slaughtered Arabs. On our approach great numbers of carrion birds rose lazily from their sickening feast. They continued to hover around, however, until our departure. The corpses had already been shrivelled by the great heat and the dry air of the desert to the proportions and semblance of mummies, with this difference, that they lay twisted in every variety of contortion. In many instances the white bones, stripped of their covering by the foul birds, stared up at the beholder. Truly a sickening sight, and one to be remembered with a shudder. I am glad to record that our brave fellows remain undisturbed in their desert graves, a fact which will, I trust, afford some small comfort to their sorrowing friends at home. Having seen the convoy well on its way, some of us returned to this camp to await the final start north of this column. The convoy would have rested here awhile before starting on its return journey had it not been necessary to hasten their departure in consequence of increased signs of the enemy in more than one direction."

As the riflemen on the hills continued their harassing fire General Buller had opened a fire upon them with shells and the Gatling gun, and these were so accurately brought to range that the Arabs were for a time smitten with consternation as the shells burst among them, and wounded a considerable number. At the same time Major Wardrop, who was on his way back to Gakdul with three hussars as escort, reverted successfully to the ingenious tactics by which he had on a former occasion done such excellent service, and by making a circuit and firing upon the rear of the enemy first from one ridge and then from another during a rapid ride, and keeping well out of sight as he moved swiftly from point to point, he impressed the Arabs with a notion that they were being surrounded by a considerably extended force. This in conjunction with the shell-fire so alarmed them that they abandoned their position and went towards Metammeh, so that General Buller was able to occupy some part of the high ground. It was soon evident, however, that the further retirement of the column to Gakdul had better be hastened. Khashm-el-Mus had already been sent thither by the general, and though it was his opinion

that the Mahdi would not attempt to cross the desert and would hesitate before advancing to engage the English, there was no longer any doubt that a large force of at least 6000 Arabs were marching in the immediate neighbourhood of Abu-Klea, whence from the adjacent hills their column could be plainly seen coming from the direction of Khartûm, while their numerous standards and the field-guns that they carried with them showed that they were the expected reinforcements of the Mahdi's troops. This was on the 23d of February, and the preparations which had already been made for the retirement of our troops from Abu-Klea were pushed forward, so that the whole force marched out in the evening—Sunday evening—and under a brilliant moon, and with the cool air of the desert at night, made a by no means unpleasant journey, without halting till they had reached Jebel es Sergain. The next day the march was continued, and from some of the rocky heights of the defile of Abu Sayle the scouts could see at about eight miles' distance signs of the convoy which had started before them.

On the 27th Lord Wolseley telegraphed to the war office that General Buller's column had reached Gakdul on the previous day with all the sick and wounded doing well. The total killed and disabled of the desert force from the time it had left Korti amounted to 30 officers and 450 men out of a force of a little over 2000. The journey from Gakdul to Korti offered no serious difficulties; and thus ended the expedition that was designed to make the first advance towards the junction of our forces at Berber, for the relief of Khartûm.

We must now return, to follow, as briefly as may be, the fortunes of the Nile column, which, under the command of General Brackenbury was with difficulty advancing to Abu-Hamed. We have already seen that the message sent from Lord Wolseley had indicated that though the news of Gordon's death might be verified, and the original object of the expedition could not therefore be carried out, it was understood to be the intention of the British government to break up the Mahdi's power in the Soudan,

that a strong force of all arms was proceeding to Suakim to crush Osman Digma, and that Lord Wolseley would probably leave Korti to join General Buller's force and co-operate with the Nile column in the capture of Berber. These were the particulars made known to the Nile force by General Brackenbury on the 13th of February. The men had not previously been informed of the fall of Khartûm, but as the Reuter's telegram which came into the camp referred to it the general thought it was desirable to circulate an official memorandum instead of leaving unauthentic rumours to disturb the minds of the men.

On the 14th of February the boat column prepared to pass the Uss Rapid opposite Uss Island, a troublesome obstacle not marked in the maps. At the same time General Butler with the mounted troops entered the beginning of the long village of Salamat, which extends for above two miles along the left bank of the river opposite the island of Sherri. The village was deserted, and there was another difficult rapid opposite the island.

The Shukook Pass had threatened to be one of the ugliest places through which the troops would have to make their way, and it was with no small satisfaction that General Brackenbury, who had taken up his headquarters at the old dervish's camp opposite to the rapid and to the entrance of the pass, saw the head of the convoy and the battery emerge. "In some places," he tells us, "there was barely room for a loaded camel to pass between the perpendicular rocks; in others, where the path was wider, the rocks had been prepared for defence by loopholed stone sconces in the same way as the koppies and ridge at Kirbekan. There was no order or regularity in the plan of the rocks. They seemed to have been upheaved as a mass in some great volcanic convulsion, and to have fallen one upon another in every direction, covering a space some six miles long by three or four broad. With an infantry tied to the boats, as it was, and with so small a force of mounted troops it would have been a most difficult task to dislodge an active and determined enemy from such a position, of which he knew every outlet, and of which we knew nothing. It was an oppressive place to remain in. It had

not even the redeeming element of grandeur, such as great massive features give to the most rugged mountain range. It represented low, sullen savagery. It was typical of the tribe to whom it belonged. Orders were issued for a general advance of all the boats from their respective positions in the morning, and I was enabled with a light heart to report to General Wolseley that our cavalry had entered Salamat, and that the convoy was through the Shukook Pass."

Salamat was found to be deserted, so that there was no obstacle in that respect, but the rapid opposite Sherri or Shuari Island was bad enough to detain the troops three days in getting through it, and with a low Nile and the probability of further work in unknown rapids the journey to Abu-Hamed could not be safely estimated at less than ten days. On the island, which had also been abandoned, a quantity of grain and dates was found; and this was fortunate, as the progress of the troops through the rapids was so slow, and though no lives were lost in the dangerous passage, two or three boats were irretrievably damaged. Headquarters had been established at Salamat, occupying a house in a walled garden near the bank of the river, belong to a sister of Abu Bekr—and aunt, therefore, of Suleiman Wad Gamr.

This was on the 17th February, and at that time the instructions received from Lord Wolseley showed that a convoy was to have started from Korosko on the 15th to reach Abu-Hamed by the 20th or 21st, on the supposition that General Brackenbury would have reached that place and would be ready to leave it on the 22d or 23d. He was to remain there, however, till Lord Wolseley had heard from General Buller, and it was calculated that he could scarcely expect to reach Berber before the 13th of March. It will thus be seen that at this time the original plan of co-operation against Berber was maintained. General Brackenbury replied that the convoy he was to receive at Abu-Hamed would suffice to supply his force with provisions till the 23d of April but not longer, as no dependence could be placed on the promises of the sheikhs to send in food or cattle. But, at all events, one immediate object of the expedition had to be accomplished, and immediately on the

occupation of Salamat, Suleiman Wad Gamr's house had been taken possession of and searched. Some significant relics were found there, including one of Colonel Stewart's visiting-cards stained with blood, extracts from M. Herbin's papers, and photographs of Herbin and of the Austrian consul, which had been presented by them to Mr. Power. Here as well as on Sherri Island numbers of papers were discovered, those at Salamat being in chests. These were all secured and carefully examined. Suleiman Wad Gamr's house was a large one standing on an eminence with a colonnade supported by pillars, and with several courtyards, each with several rooms. It was entirely destroyed, the roofs being pulled down, and all wood useful for firewood being carried away. The walls were shaken by charges of gun-cotton, and then utterly destroyed by pick and shovel. Beams and solid wooden doors, rare articles in that country, were burned, and the house razed to the ground. All his *sakyehs* were also burned, and his palm-trees hewed down and destroyed with fire. Abu Bekr's property and that of his sister, Suleiman's aunt, were spared, but the house and property of Sheikh Oman, the man who had played false and escaped from the vakeel and rejoined Suleiman, were destroyed.

General Brackenbury writes: "These houses were of a higher class than any we had met with in the Shagiyeh or Monassir country. They had some attempt at ornament and stood in gardens. In Abu Bekr's garden there was an orange tree full of blossom, the only one we had seen since leaving Dongola."

On the 19th February the column continued the advance from Salamat to push on to Abu-Hamed: the cavalry and camel troop first with every transport camel fully loaded up with grain and provisions. By five o'clock in the evening a bivouac was made at Sulimanyeh, and about nine miles forward and two and a half miles below the wreck of Stewart's steamer. Colonel Buller, who in reconnoitring had arrived opposite the wreck, had heard two Arab scouts shout from the right bank of the river, and had seen them ride off on their camels to the north.

Beyond the site of the wreck an Arab, who had been taken

prisoner, declared that Suleiman Wad Gamr had arrived at Sulimanyeh on the 16th, and on the following day had gone northward with Fakri Wad Etman, accompanied by about 400 men and a number of women and children, with many cattle, camels, and baggage. Lekalik, with the force which had retreated from the Shukook Pass, had, it was said, previously gone in the same direction, and the two sheikhs who had been with him at Shukook had been sent direct to Berber. Another prisoner, who said that he had left the neighbourhood of Abu Hamed on the 14th, had heard that many men from Berber had arrived there, and that 2000 Ababdehs, 1000 Bisharin, and some Robatab were assembled for the defence of the place. All these reports seemed to point to the probability that the enemy, reluctant or unable to show further resistance on the left bank of the Nile, would make a stand at Abu Hamed, and this conclusion was strengthened by the fact of the appearance of mounted scouts on the right bank and their gestures of menace and defiance. General Brackenbury therefore determined to cross the mounted troops and the transports to the right bank as soon as possible, and after inquiry it was settled that the crossing should be effected at Hebbah, where, at the spot directly opposite the wrecked steamer, the conditions for taking the troops across were most favourable: the high left bank commanding the neighbouring country and the opposite shore, while a long sand-bank beneath the high bank led easily to the water, and on the opposite side only a quarter of a mile below was a high Nile island, forming a strong position for infantry, and with a similar sand-bank, the breadth from the left bank to the island being about 300 yards, while the island itself was separated from the right bank only by a narrow channel, over which at one place there was a dry crossing. The passage of the whole force was accomplished on the 20th and 21st, and was watched by the enemy's scouts on the left bank from behind the sand-hills less than a mile off in the desert until Colonel Butler dispersed them with a party of hussars. Guns, camels, horses, donkeys, baggage, all were taken across with remarkable quickness and success under the superintendence of Colonel Alleyne assisted by the staff-officers.

Two crossing-places were worked at the same time, and fifty boats were employed for each crossing, which was made down-stream and represented a distance of about 400 yards, the camels and horses being towed across with ropes to their heads; the horses swimming freely, the camels, who are not swimmers, floating on their sides with their heads held out of the water by the tow-ropes. Only three camels and one donkey were lost, and the crossing was otherwise effected without any serious accident.

Abu Bekr, the uncle of Suleiman Wad Gamr, had been compelled to go with the column; and now that they had come to Hebbeh, the scene of the murder of Colonel Stewart, was in mortal fear that he would be executed on the spot. Of course there was no such intention, and he was soon able to point out the house of Fakri Wad Etman, a native house of mud with an entrance into a small courtyard, on one side of which stood the house. It was not here, however, that Colonel Stewart and his companions would have been received, since this was the abode of the women. The murder must have taken place in the *Salaamlík*, or guest-chamber—a detached mud hut of one room only about fifty yards from the dwelling-house. General Brackenbury says: "We entered this small room, stooping to pass under the low doorway, with feelings of awe. But there was nothing to remind us of the terrible tragedy that had taken place there six months before. There were no signs of blood. The floor and all the ground round the hut had been carefully strewn with fine sand." A hundred yards in front of the door, on the river bank, stood the group of palms where some of Stewart's party had been attacked and killed according to the account given by the stoker Hassein. Before visiting this house, which was one of the first group of such buildings in Hebbeh, General Brackenbury and several officers had inspected the wreck of the steamer about four hundred yards up stream. The vessel was impaled on a large rock about two hundred yards from the proper right bank of the river. She was a much larger vessel than they had supposed her to be, measuring seventy feet from stem to stern and twenty-two feet in breadth over her paddles, the depth of her hold was four

feet six inches. The sides were protected by plates of iron, which were pitted with bullet marks and torn by case-shot or splinters of shell. She lay with her keel sixteen feet above the water level, as it was then low Nile, in an intricate narrow channel studded with rocks; while on the left bank of the river there was open clear water three hundred yards in breadth. "To us," says General Brackenbury, "it seemed incredible that the wreck was an accident, for it was almost impossible to believe she had not been purposely steered to her destruction. And yet, who can say? At high Nile she would have come rushing down the swift water above, and a very small error in steering would have caused her to be swept in here. The natives had stripped her of everything that could be of use, leaving her a mere shell. All her woodwork had been carried away, including the floats of her paddles, and such iron as was sufficiently portable. The after part of her hold was filled with sand, her bows were high out of water. A few torn scraps of letters and paper, of no particular interest, were littered about, but there was nothing whatever worth preserving as a relic." At the scene of the murder were found some fragments of books, some more of Stewart's visiting-cards, a shirt sleeve stained with blood, and a few papers which seemed to have belonged to Herbin and Power; but at Sherri Island there had been discovered five pages of Stewart's diary, describing Gordon's entry into Abu-Hamed and Berber on the way from Korosko to Khartûm. Abu Bekr said, that as soon as the steamer went ashore Fakri Wad Etman had sent a message to Suleiman Wad Gamr at Salamat, and that Suleiman had immediately ordered his camels, and had hastened to Hebbeh. This was found to confirm Hassein's assertion that the wreck had taken place at nine, and that Suleiman first appeared on the scene in the afternoon. The village of Hebbeh was destroyed on the 21st under the direction of the officers of the intelligence department, who searched carefully for papers or relics, even digging the ground wherever it seemed to have been recently disturbed, but nothing of importance was discovered, and no trace was found of Stewart's journal, which, as we have seen,



there was reason to believe had been carried to the Mahdi. The houses of Fakri Wad Etman and all his *sakyehs* and palm-trees were utterly demolished.

On the 22d and 23d the whole force again advanced, and on the evening of the latter day the last boat of the column had closed up, and the 215 boats lay moored side by side along the bank, having averaged ten and a half miles rowing against very swift water. Mounted troops reconnoitred to the front, the convoy and artillery marched on a broad front over the undulating desert sand, and dispositions were made to close up in such a formation as to resist any possible attack.

Spies returning from Berber and Abu-Hamed brought intelligence that there were only a few of the enemy between Abu-Hamed and the place at which our troops had bivouacked on the right bank, but it was evident that the Arabs were not aware of the column having crossed the river, for it was reported that a force under Suleiman Wad Gamr and other sheikhs were holding a rocky position on the other bank to oppose our advance. Our bivouac on the yellow sand occupied a strong semicircular position covering the boats and mounted troops on the sand-bank below. They were now within thirty miles of Abu-Hamed, resting after a hard day's work, in which 215 boats had been rowed through nearly eleven miles of rushing water. The wounded were all doing well, there had been no death since leaving the camp at Dulka, the men were in splendid condition, not one sick man had been sent back, there had been but one death from disease, and there were only eighteen men on the sick list. The general was perfectly confident that he would be able to vanquish any force that the Mahdi could bring against them in the open country that they were now approaching. At nine o'clock at night a rocket was fired from a high hill near the camp, and was followed by another five minutes afterwards—the signal which had been agreed upon in case the convoy from Korosko should have sent scouts to watch for the approach of the column. All was still, but a vigilant watch was kept, and every precaution was taken to prevent a sudden attack. The *réveillé* sounded at

half-past five on the morning of the 24th of January; at seven o'clock the leading boats of the Gordons had started. Cavalry scouts and patrols were out on duty, and the main body of cavalry had moved out of camp when a messenger arrived with a despatch from Korti, dated 20th February. "I opened it," writes General Brackenbury, "it was mostly in cipher; but some words in clear caught my eye, sent a cold shiver through me, and caused me at once to sound the halt." This was the message:—"Buller evacuated Gubat. His main body went to Gakdul with all sick and wounded. He remains with about 1500 men at Abu-Klea. The enemy have now begun to fire into his camp there, and have killed and wounded some of his men. He awaits camels to fall back on Gakdul, which I hope he will begin to do to-morrow, the 21st instant; but owing to the weak state of his camels all his men must go on foot. I have abandoned all hope of going to Berber before the autumn campaign begins. You will therefore not go to Abu-Hamed, but having burned and destroyed everything in the neighbourhood where Stewart was murdered, you will withdraw all your force to Abu-Dom, near Merawi, bringing all the mudir's troops with you.

"Please express to the troops Lord Wolseley's high appreciation of their gallant conduct in action, and of the military spirit they have displayed in overcoming the great difficulties presented by the river. Having punished the Monassir people for Stewart's murder, it is not intended to undertake any further military operations until after the approaching hot season.

"Further orders will be sent to you upon your reaching Abu-Dom. Until you have occupied the Shukook Pass, and made sure of every one through it, you had better keep this telegram entirely to yourself and Butler. Of course, if you are in the presence of the enemy when you receive this, you must defeat him before turning back. If you do not receive this before you have reached Abu-Hamed, or are so near to it that it is merely a question of occupying it without opposition, you must halt there, and send back information at once to me, when I will start the convoy from Korosko, which I do not otherwise mean to despatch.

Of course it is impossible at this distance to give you positive orders, but Lord Wolseley has every confidence in your military discretion."

This could only be interpreted as a recall, and bitter as the disappointment was to officers and men it was evident that events had made it necessary for them to return without delay, since if General Buller had been surrounded by the main body of the Mahdi's followers from Khartûm Lord Wolseley would not have had a sufficient force at Korti to march into the desert to his rescue. General Brackenbury instantly prepared for the return journey after sending the following reply to Lord Wolseley:—"I received your telegram this morning, just as the troops were starting up river. I am, by the map, about twenty-six miles from Abu-Hamed. I am not in the immediate presence of the enemy, nor have the patrols, who have been six miles beyond this, had any touch of the enemy. Nor do I anticipate meeting the enemy to-day should I continue my advance. My latest information is that the enemy intend to fight at Abu-Hamed, and I anticipate opposition if I advance upon it. There is a cataract between me and Abu-Hamed, and if opposed it might take some days before I could occupy the place. I am confident I could beat any force opposed to me, but I feel it my duty, in view of the facts contained in the first part of your telegram, to fall back immediately to Abu-Dom, and I shall fall back to Hebbbeh to-day. I shall return by the right bank."

By returning along the right bank as far as Merawi the general would avoid the danger of opposition in the Shukook Pass, and also the possibility of any large force of the enemy assembling at short notice on that side.

There is no need to follow all the details of the return journey. At noon on that same day the boats commenced to move downstream led by Colonel Denison commanding the Canadian voyageurs; the column moving in reversed order from its progress up-stream. On the 25th the destruction of the houses and the sakyehs at Hebbbeh was completed. On the 26th the advanced guard was concentrated opposite Salamat. On the way down

there were signs of a hasty retreat having been made from Sherri Island, a few native boats and rough rafts were discovered and destroyed, several natives watching our troops from behind distant rocks. The rapids were not passed without the wreck of three boats and much damage to others, which had to be repaired. On the 28th preparations were made for the advance through the Shukook, where it was expected that the boats might be fired upon, but not a single native was seen amidst the rocky cliffs, and though to pass the rapid it was necessary that every boat should be taken down by the voyageurs,—the Gordon Highlanders and headquarters reached Dulka Island the same night, and bivouacked opposite the old camp. There on the 1st of March the troops closed up and the advance was continued to Birti, where the vakeel was in camp and prepared to march with the column near the river.

The voyageurs performed their duty admirably. Some of the rapids required a voyageur for each boat, and as there were but sixty-seven of these men and more than two hundred boats, each man had to make from three to four trips, and in some cases, where two were required, each made seven trips. Many boats had been injured, and on the 4th of March, in passing through the tortuous fourth cataract, two wounded men and a sergeant were drowned by the striking of a boat upon a rock; another wounded man also died during the passage, but the journey was made with marvellous skill and despatch; the troops having descended in nine days a distance which it had taken thirty-one days to ascend, reaching Hamdab on the 4th of March. There a telegram from Korti bearing General Buller's name showed that the desert column had accomplished its retreat from Abu-Klea. This telegram gave instructions that Colonel Butler should be left in command at Abu-Dom with the Black Watch, a troop of hussars, the Egyptian camel corps, two guns of the Egyptian battery, a detachment of engineers, and a hundred transport camels, with all the rations that could be spared, while General Brackenbury took the rest of the column to Korti. The mudir's troops had been halted at Duaim, and were afterwards sent to hold Dugiyet at the entrance of the Berber road.

On the evening of the 6th of March General Brackenbury held a review of the river column—"the first and the last time it was ever inspected on parade. . . . Two thousand of the finest fighting men that it ever was any man's lot to command were inspected in line, marched past, re-formed in line of quarter-columns, and advanced in review order." Having said a few farewell words to commanding officers General Brackenbury bade the column, as the "river column," good-bye.

The voyageurs were drawn up at the flagstaff. Out of 377 men who had left Canada ten had died, six of them having been drowned in the Nile. They had been engaged only for six months, but eighty-nine of them had renewed their service, and of these sixty-seven had gone with the river column, where both their officers and men had worked with untiring vigour and dauntless courage.

On the morning of the 7th of March General Brackenbury started with the main body of his troops for Korti, where he arrived and handed over his command next day.

This then was the end of the double expedition which it was hoped would meet to co-operate for the relief of Khartûm and the rescue of General Gordon, of whose death there was now little doubt on the part of the officers in command, although in England it was not till some time afterwards that the hope was abandoned that he had escaped to the Equatorial provinces, or had found protection with some friendly tribe, or was even kept in durance by the Mahdi himself.

The telegraphic message sent from Cairo by Sir E. Baring to Earl Granville on the afternoon of the 15th of February may be said to contain as much of certainty as any subsequent account of the actual taking of Khartûm and the murder of Gordon, and it was merely a repetition of the message sent from Korti to Cairo by Lord Wolseley earlier on the same day:—

"A cavass of Ibrahim Bey Rushdy left Khartûm fourteen days ago. Rebels entered Khartûm at daylight 26th January, through treachery of Farag Pasha, who opened two gates in south wall. On first alarm cavass went with his master to government

house. They met Gordon, who was armed, coming out, with Mohamed Bey Mustapha and twenty cavasses. When proceeding towards Austrian consulate they met party of rebels, who fired a volley. Gordon fell at once, and two beys were also killed. Hanzel, Austrian consul, was killed in his own house. Nicola, Greek consul, and the doctor are prisoners. Cavass saw the two steamers carrying Sir Charles Wilson's party come up to Omdurman, and gives circumstantial account of what he saw at Khartûm when it was taken by rebels."

We have seen by the evidences to be found in the journals, and more distinctly in the letters sent by Gordon himself by the *Bordein* and received by Sir Charles Wilson,<sup>1</sup> how the fatal meshes were closing round Khartûm, and the farewell words that appeared in the more private of these letters sounded the note of approaching death, especially when it was remembered that Gordon had repeatedly declared that he would never be taken alive.

A despatch sent on the 12th of February by the special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* at Abu-Kru, contains what appears to be a fair summing up of the native reports.

"General Gordon's trusted messenger, George, a well-known Khartûm Greek merchant, who for months past has been intrusted with all letters passing from or to the besieged, and who has been living on board one of the steamers sent here, states that nearly all the natives' stories agree that General Gordon, on learning that he was betrayed, made a rush for the magazine in the Catholic mission building. Finding that the enemy were actually in possession of that building by the treachery of Faragh, General Gordon returned to government house, and was killed while trying to re-enter it. Some say that he was shot; others that he was stabbed.

The Madhi's people were admitted to Khartûm at ten o'clock on the night of January 26.

George adds that the rebels massacred all the white people, men, women, and children, throwing the bodies into the Nile, many of which corpses he and others saw whilst with Sir Charles Wilson's party.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv. pp. 78-88.

The families of all the men on board General Gordon's steamers were also murdered. . . .

Khasm-el-Mus, the commandant with the steamers here, who has proved so loyal throughout, states that even had the English got to Khartûm a month earlier they would have been too late to save Gordon, for the two traitors had committed themselves, and would never have awaited our arrival, as they feared that General Gordon would punish them.

The people of Khartûm had despaired of ever seeing English soldiers, and tried to make the best terms they could. After the battle of Abu-Klea the Mahdi no doubt promised much."

There were many differences in the accounts, but, at the same time, there was a general agreement, and there were numerous discussions and some contention as to the conditions that preceded the taking of Khartûm, and the influences that precipitated the event. Lieutenant-colonel Kitchener was inclined to disbelieve the statement that the place was given up by the treachery of Faragh Pasha, but Colonel Sir Charles Wilson was of opinion that it was he who admitted the Mahdi's troops, though after the 25th, or, at any rate, after the 30th of December the town could not have resisted a determined assault. Sir Charles Wilson and Colonel Kitchener were probably in a position to obtain the most accurate information; and the former, summing up the direct and the most trustworthy of the indirect evidence, points out that, with the exception of the brief message of the 29th of December, 1884, "Khartûm all right, and can hold out for years;" the last authentic news of the siege of Khartûm is contained in General Gordon's journal, which closes on the 14th December, 1884. "NOW MARK THIS, if the expeditionary force, and I ask for no more than two hundred men, does not come in ten days, *the town may fall*; and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye." Sir Charles Wilson goes on to say that the crisis would naturally arrive when the provisions were finished, and Gordon did not expect them to last much longer than the 14th December. From Christmas-day, 1884, to the 20th January, 1885, the garrison lived on coarse bread made from the pith of the palm-tree, on gum, and

on a little tobacco. The fact that General Gordon was able to induce, not only the garrison, but the civilians in the city to hold out for a month under such conditions, is one of the most remarkable features of his defence of Khartûm, and affords the strongest proof of his wonderful influence over natives of all classes.

On the 25th January General Gordon does not appear to have left the palace, but he transacted business with several people; and one man, a Copt, stated that he saw him there six hours after sunset. Before daylight on the 26th the Arabs attacked the lines of Khartûm at the Messalamia gate and met with little or no resistance. Part of the attacking force seems to have passed between Fort Mogrim and the White Nile, over ground left dry by the fall of the river; whilst part crossed the ditch, according to one account, by filling it up with straw, native beds, &c., which the men carried with them as they advanced to the assault; or, according to another account, by filling it up during the night after the connivance of Faragh Pasha and Behnasawi Bey commanding the troops in that quarter. The city was soon in the hands of the Arabs, who, for about three hours, killed every one they met; a crier then went round proclaiming the Aman or General Amnesty, but many Shagiyeh were killed two days afterwards. Some black soldiers held out by the Buri gate until they saw Khartûm was in the hands of the Arabs, and the garrison on Tuti island did not surrender until mid-day. The names of Faragh Pasha and Behnasawi Bey were associated with the act of treachery. Sir Charles Wilson believed that these men, who commanded the troops at the Messalamia gate, knew that an assault was going to be made during the night of the 25th-26th, and that they purposely neglected to take any precautions to resist it; they probably encouraged the soldiers to leave the lines and go into the city to search for food. Sir Charles records that before General Gordon's arrival at Khartûm a deputation headed by Mohammed Bey-el-Jazali had visited the Mahdi at Rahad, and presented to him letters and petitions, signed by persons of all classes at Khartûm, begging an assurance of safety, and expressing readiness to submit. He refers to the fact that according to General Gordon's journal



there appears to have been throughout the siege an influential section of the people in favour of the Mahdi, and he considers that an act of treachery such as that attributed to Faragh was not surprising under the circumstances. Faragh, however, was killed after the capture of Khartûm—as was supposed by the orders of the Mahdi, but Behnasawi was afterwards known to be in high favour.

This is the brief but well-grounded account given by Sir Charles Wilson, who concludes by saying that there were two independent accounts of Gordon's death which in all essential particulars agreed with each other, and appeared to be trustworthy. One was that of the cavass, which was telegraphed in brief by Lord Wolseley to Cairo. This man professed to be an eye-witness, and said: "On hearing the noise I got my master's donkey and went with him to the palace. We met Gordon Pasha at the outer door of the palace. Muhammed Bey Mustafa, with my master, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and about twenty cavasses then went with Gordon towards the house of the Austrian consul, Hansal, near the church, when we met some rebels in open space near the outer gate of the palace. Gordon Pasha was walking in front leading the party. The rebels fired a volley, and Gordon was killed at once: nine of the cavasses, Ibrahim Bey Rushdi, and Muhammed Bey Mustafa, were killed, the rest ran away." The messenger who gave the other account was not present, but went to the palace soon after sunrise. His statement was: "Faragh Pasha withdrew the soldiers from the gate near the White Nile and allowed the rebels to enter. Wad en Nejumi and Khalifa Ali led the way; every one was asleep, and before the sun rose the town was full of Arabs. Some went to the palace and met Gordon attended by some of his guard at the gate. Gordon fired his revolver, and the rebels fired a volley, killing Gordon immediately. I saw Gordon lying dead near the palace gate." Sir Charles thought it not unlikely that General Gordon, when he heard that the Arabs had entered the city, tried to reach the church where the ammunition was stored, and that he intended either to try and hold out there until the relief expedition arrived, or to blow up the magazine and prevent

its falling into the hands of the Mahdi. Gordon was killed a few moments after he had quitted the palace gate, and it would appear that, according to the barbarous custom of the Soudan, his head was struck off and exposed at Omdurman.

Of course there were other stories, some of them wild enough; and a Greek, who represented that he had escaped in the Mahdi's uniform and reached Berber, appeared at Dongola with a tale in which he reported that an Arab had gone up into the room where Gordon was reading the Bible and had there killed him, cut off his head and stuck it on a spear to convey it to the Mahdi. A narrative of two other refugees, representing themselves to be soldiers of Gordon's army who were taken and sold as slaves, is so characteristic that it is worth noting so far as a few extracts are concerned.

"That night Khartûm was delivered into the hands of the rebels. It fell through the treachery of the accursed Faragh Pasha, the Circassian, who opened the gate. May he never reach Paradise! May Shaytan take possession of his soul! But it was Kismet. The gate was called 'Buri.' It was on the Blue Nile. We were on guard near, but did not see what was going on. We were attacked and fought desperately at the gate. Twelve of us were killed and twenty-two retreated to a high room, where we were taken prisoners. . . .

A cry arose, 'To the palace! to the palace!' A wild and furious band rushed towards it, but they were resisted by the black troops, who fought desperately. They knew there was no mercy for them, and that even were their lives spared they would be enslaved, and the state of the slave, the perpetual bondage with hard taskmasters, is worse than death. Slaves are not treated well, as you think; heavy chains are round their ankles and middle, and they are lashed for the least offence till blood flows. We had fought for the Christian pasha and for the Turks, and we knew that we should receive no mercy. We, the party I was with, could not help being taken prisoners. The house was set on fire. The fight raged, and the slaughter continued till the streets were slippery with blood. The rebels rushed onward to the palace. We

saw a mass rolling to and fro, but did not see Gordon Pasha killed. He met his fate as he was leaving the palace near the large tree which stands on the esplanade. The palace is not a stone's-throw, or at any rate a gunshot distance, from the Austrian consul's house. He was going in that direction, to the magazine on the Kenniseh, a long way off. We did not hear what became of his body, nor did we hear that his head was cut off; but we saw the head of the traitor Faragh, who met with his deserts. We have heard that it was the blacks that ran away, and that the Egyptian soldiers fought well; that is not true. They were craven. Had it not been for them, in spite of the treachery of many within the town, the Arabs would not have got in, for we watched the traitors. And now fearful scenes took place in every house and building, in the large market-place, in the small bazaars. There were the same terrible scenes in the dwellings where the window-sills and door-lintels were painted azrek (blue), where there had been many feasts and fantasias, where merissa had flowed in plenty, and where the walls were built of wahál, and the roof built of dhoora stalk. Men were slain shrieking for mercy, when mercy was not in the hearts of our savage enemies. Women and children were robbed of their jewels of gold and jewels of silver, of their bracelets, necklaces of precious stones, and carried off to be sold to the Bishareen merchants as slaves. Yes, and white women too—Egyptians and Circassians. Mother and daughter alike were dragged off from their homes of comfort. These were widows, wives, and daughters of Egyptian officers, some of whom had been killed with Hicks Pasha; wives and children of Egyptian merchants formerly rich, owning ships and mills, gardens and shops. These were sold afterwards, some for 340 thaleries or more, some for 250, according to age and good looks. And the poor black women, already slaves, and their children were taken off too. These were sold too, for a hundred, eighty, or seventy thaleries. Their husbands and masters were slain before their eyes; and yet I hear it said there was no massacre at the taking of Khartûm! They lie who say so, and are in league with Mahomet Achmet. You must not believe all that men coming from Omdurman tell you. Mahomet Achmet and the

dervishes send you false reports of everything, and you believe them; then they laugh. This fighting and spilling of blood continued till the sun rode high in the sky—red, yet darkened by smoke and dust. There was riot and clamour, hubbub and wrangling over spoil; cursing was heard till the hour of evening prayer, but the muezzin was not called; neither were any prayers offered up at the mosque on that dark day in the annals of Khartûm. But the history of those scenes will not be written on its records; for all scrolls and papers and books in the archives were destroyed and scattered abroad. Yet the howling herd, . . . the screeching devils bespattered with gore, swarming about in droves and bands, found not the plunder that they had been promised or had expected. Then they were exasperated. Their fury knew no bounds, and they sought out Faragh Pasha; but he was with the dervishes. He had presented himself to them as one deserving well of honour and rewards. ‘Where is the hidden treasure of the Greek merchants and Bachalees; of Leontides and Georgio Themetrio? Yes, and of the Franchesi Marquêt; of the Italian Michaelo? We know that you are acquainted with the secret hiding-place. Where are all the thaleries of Marcopolo and of the German tailor Klein? We know that those that left Khartûm were unable to carry away their silver, and you know where it is hid.’

The dervishes, seeing the tumult, questioned him sharply and addressed him thus: ‘The long-expected One, our Lord, desires to know where the English pasha hid his wealth. We know he was very rich, and every day paid large sums of money; this has not been concealed from our lord. Now, therefore, let us know, that we may bear him word where all the ‘felluce’ he gave the troops is hidden, so that we may put it into the treasury. Let him be bound and examined in the inner chamber.’

Then were the doors of the house where the dervishes were, and the gates of the gardens outside—they were in the Jeneseh—closed against the Arab soldiery, and they were driven out, though angry words and threats were loudly heard. Faragh was now questioned, but he swore by Allah and by the souls of his fathers

back to three generations that Gordon had no money, and that he knew of no hidden money or treasure. 'You lie,' cried the dervishes. 'You wish after a while to come here, dig, and get it all for yourself.'

'If the Inglezze had no money or silver, how did he make all those silver medals we have seen?'

'Most of them are lead,' Faragh replied, 'and he paid every one with paper.' 'It is false,' they replied, 'and now have a care; listen to what we are going to say to you. We are sure you know where the money lies concealed. We are not careful of your life, for you have betrayed the man whose salt you had eaten; you have been the servant of the infidel, and you have betrayed even him. Unless you unfold this secret of the buried treasure, you shall surely die.'

But Faragh, it is said—for we were not there—seeing that his end was approaching, that his words were not believed, assumed a proud and haughty bearing, and an attitude of defiance.

'I care not,' he said, 'for your threats. I have told the truth, Allah knows. There is no money, neither is there treasure. You are magnoons (blockheads) to suppose there is money; but if there were you would not divide it fairly among your followers—to every one his portion. You would keep it among yourselves. I have done a great deed. I have delivered to your lord and master the city, which you could never have taken without my help. You would have been beaten back from the trenches by the Inglezze, who, even now, await their time to punish you; and I have secrets regarding these, which, if I die, will die with me. I tell you again there is no treasure, but you will rue the day if you kill me.'

One among the dervishes then stepped forward, and struck him, bound as he was, in the mouth, telling him to cease his fool's prophecies; while another, incensed, rushed at him and struck him on the back of his neck with his two-edged sword, so that with one blow his head fell from his shoulders.

So perished the arch-traitor—may his soul be afflicted! But as for Gordon Pasha, the magnanimous, may his soul be 'enjoying fuller knowledge!'

I say nearly all the Egyptian men were slain in spite of their casting themselves down and praying for mercy. Faragh Pasha's head was then carried off to Mahomet Achmet. We heard this when the Kordofan soldiers, who guarded us at the Dormas gate, talked among themselves. We were there for some days; we saw nothing; but only heard what these soldiers told us. They said two steamers with English had come up and gone back."

This is an example of some of the stories told, but when the most credible were listened to and the evidence sifted, the conclusion at which Sir Charles Wilson arrived seemed to be the true one; and—to quote the words with which he closes his record—"for more than ten long weary months the wild tribes of the Soudan were kept in check by the genius, the indomitable resolution, and the fertile resources of one man; and long after the controversies of the present day have been forgotten, the defence of Khartûm by General Gordon will be looked upon as one of the most memorable military achievements of modern times."

## CHAPTER X.

## CONCLUSION.

The Suakim Expedition. Contract for the Railway. Arrangements for Forces in the Summer. Plan of the Campaign. Osman Digma : fighting near Suakim. Kassala. Skirmishes and Engagements. Hasheen. Tamai. Withdrawal of Troops from Egypt. Death of the Mahdi. His Successor. Change of Ministry in England. Results of the Suakim Expedition. Consequences of British Intervention in Egypt.

Though the present page commences with the arrangements made for commencing a new campaign in the Eastern Soudan and for concentrating fresh troops at Suakim, the story of the remarkable episode of our intervention in Egypt may be said to draw to a close. The fall of Khartûm and the death of Gordon had been a tragic solution of the problem that had so long engaged the attention of our government, and the original propositions for the protection of Suakim and the Red Sea territory against the hostile attempts of Osman Digma and the tribes who followed him, and were still occupying a portion of the desert country beyond Suakim, had been reverted to. That there would be considerable difficulty in inflicting a thorough defeat on this truculent lieutenant of the Mahdi had already been proved. He commanded a horde of savage fanatics, by whom life seemed to be held of little account when they once determined to make a furious onslaught, and the nature of the country made it exceedingly difficult for our troops to follow them when they retreated into the mountains or the wild and arid recesses of the desert.

There was considerable uncertainty as to the real power and influence of the Mahdi. His brother-in-law, who had been made prisoner at Esneh and taken down to Cairo, declared that Achmed would not fight Turkish troops, but would endeavour to make common cause with them for the expulsion of all foreigners; but he also denied that the Mahdi assumed any religious apostleship, and declared that he was only defending his country against exorbitant taxation and the suppression of the slave-trade. This, of course, was false as far as the denial of religious assumption was concerned; but the question remained how far the English ministry was justified in carrying on the war in the southern provinces. It was obvious enough that members of the government and prominent representatives of the Liberal interest were strongly opposed to a continuance of the occupation of the Soudan by British troops. Mr. Courtney and Mr. John Morley had declared that though while Gordon lived it was our obvious duty to use every effort for his rescue, if he were dead we ought to return to the position contemplated when Lord Wolseley's instructions were drafted, and when he was ordered to take no further offensive

measures after the rescue of Gordon and Stewart. Otherwise, it was argued, we should find ourselves embarked on an endless enterprise—nothing less than the conquest and the permanent occupation of the Soudan—a territory half as big as Europe, and with such vast spaces of almost impassable desert, and such a climate, that to hold it with European troops would be a task beyond reasonable contemplation.

At the same time it was felt to be impossible that we should withdraw our forces from Egypt, and though France was still “nagging” and protesting against our continued occupation, even French politicians of liberal and statesmanlike views acknowledged that, as we did not occupy Egypt for the sake of Turkey, or for the purpose of propitiating any other European power, but had found ourselves there for the protection of our own and European interests, for the purpose of maintaining the established government and suppressing rebellion, and with the general concurrence of other European powers, we could not evacuate the country until something had been effected towards the end that we had had in view. It could scarcely be denied that the opinions of those who, having been well acquainted with the nature of the Soudanese sheikhs, declared that non-intervention was the best policy, because the chiefs would soon quarrel with the Mahdi and among themselves, and the revolt would end in tribal hostilities and consequently would die out, were already to some extent being verified. There were rumours of serious defections among the rebel host, and it soon became evident that the rebellion in the south was likely to fall to pieces, and that the most important factor with which we had to deal was the hostility of the tribes on the borders of the Red Sea and about Suakim and Kassala. Osman Digma, in fact, was likely to become a more formidable foe than the Mahdi, and the character and antecedents of the man himself were significant. It appears that the Digma family were previously rich and influential; but on the abolition of the slave-trade they suffered severe losses, and some of them were imprisoned for being implicated in dealing in slaves, so that the family gradually became poor and in debt. In 1877 Ali Digma, one of the brothers, was caught by her Majesty's ship *Wild Swan*, with ninety-six slaves off Sheek Beragoot, a small harbour about 30 miles north of Suakim, and in consequence Osman's family suffered a loss of at least £1000.

Osman Digma, the head of the family, then became a broker in the town of Berber, and occasionally went to Suakim to sell merchandise of various kinds. In 1882 he brought ostrich feathers and shipped them to Jeddah, remaining there himself, and staying about six months. He then left for Khartûm, afterwards going to Kordofan, where he remained some months, and then returned to Erkowit about the 23d Ramadan, or the 28th of July, 1883, bringing letters from the Mahdi to Tewfik Bey, the governor of Suakim, the prefect of Sinkat and Tokar, Mohamed-el-Amien, sheikh of



the Erkowit tribes, and Said Ahmed-el-Shingety, the mufti of the council at Suakim.

At the beginning of August news was received of his being at Erkowit, and an attempt was made to arrest him. Later in the month he collected a force for the purpose of attacking Sinkat. He was, however, repulsed with a loss of eighty men, including Ahmed Digma and his son, who were his brother and nephew, and he himself was wounded in two places.

After this defeat most of the tribes left him, and he could only muster about one hundred and fifty men in all. In September his followers were reduced to about seventy-five, and he then went from place to place trying to obtain the confidence of the tribes a second time.

In October Major Mohammed Khilil, in command of two companies of infantry, was defeated in a mountain pass on the Abeint road to Sinkat, about 30 miles from Suakim, and only twenty-five men escaped. After that time Osman Digma's prestige continued to increase.

The slave-trade was his chief source of wealth; and he had such great influence with many of the native chiefs, that in spite of his subsequent reverses they remained for a long time faithful to him. He represented their commercial interests—or they thought so; and he, like his relation the Mahdi, and, indeed, like most of the Soudanese chiefs, was an accomplished liar, in fact he was said to have attained the very highest distinction in an art which elicits the admiration of the Oriental races.

Osman Digma maintained a defiant attitude although he had been badly beaten by the garrison at Kassala, who had sent out a force in search of provisions, the men intrenching themselves, covering the trenches with long grass. The rebels attacked them without knowing of the intrenchment, and were defeated, a large number of them being killed—report said three thousand,—a result which so enraged Osman Digma that he was reported to have killed the messenger who carried the tidings. Kassala had a garrison of three thousand men, including a battalion which had seen much service, but their position was growing almost desperate, so closely was the place invested by the rebels, and though Colonel Chermiside endeavoured to pass a supply of cartridge-fillers and other things into the place, the people who were shut up there were in hourly apprehension after having held out for more than a year. But the tribes in that district continued to be loyal, owing, it was said, to the action of Said Morghani, and as it was rumoured that Osman Digma intended to make a sudden assault on Suakim itself before the arrival of the additional forces from England, it was believed that, at anyrate, the active operations that were on foot there would draw the rebels away from the neighbourhood of Kassala and from Massowa, where the Italian and Egyptian flags were afterwards hoisted at the citadel, the Italian commander taking entire charge of the administration of the place.

The news that a large British force was on its way to Suakim and that an advance was to be made to Berber caused much excitement, and the news was circulated as much as possible among the tribesmen of the surrounding country in order to induce those who were wavering to throw in their lot with us. At Suakim itself the Royal Engineers had carried out some very useful work after the arrival of General Fremantle. At Quarantine Island piers or landing-stages had been erected where large steamers could discharge cargo with great facility. The rebels, who used to creep up towards Suakim and conceal themselves in a kind of plantation of palm-trees and shrubs called Osman Digma's gardens, just outside the town, could no longer find permanent shelter there, as the electric light at one of the forts could be thrown upon the place, which presented a beautiful appearance under the brilliant illumination. This enabled the gunners to direct their fire upon any spot where the enemy might endeavour to assemble. Before the arrival of any part of the new expedition Osman Digma was concentrating his troops at Tamai, where he was said to have from ten to twelve thousand men, while an advanced body of rebels two thousand strong occupied Hassein (or Hasheen). The news of the fall of Khartûm had reached the rebels in the camp, and had filled them with exultation and with a determination to resist our advance by digging trenches, forming rifle-pits, throwing up breast-works, and making shelters along the sides of the nullahs.

It will be seen that the construction of a railway from Suakim to Berber, even though it was to be completed only by five-mile sections, protected as it progressed by sand-bag or other batteries and a sufficient force, was likely to be a difficult enterprise; but the first instalment of railway plant and material was already prepared, the well-known firm of Messrs. Lucas and Aird having been chosen as contractors, or rather as "agents," who according to the actual reading of the minute issued by the government were to construct "for the war department for the purposes of the expeditionary force sent out to Suakim, and, according to the orders and under the control of the general officer for the time being in command of the same force, a 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge single line of railway from Suakim, and thence in sections to so far towards Berber as may from time to time be ordered in writing by the secretary of state, and also an 18-in. gauge single line of railway in or about Suakim as may from time to time be ordered by the secretary of state. The war department engages to keep the way clear and the working-staff protected." The agents were to supply plant and working-staff, and with regard to the latter were at liberty, with the consent of the war secretary, to employ natives as labourers. The staff was to be paid by the government, and rationed and clothed by the war department. If any of the working staff should be killed by the enemy in the Soudan, or die from wounds, or from the effect of the climate, his

representatives were to be entitled to a gratuity equal to one year's pay. The agents were to receive a commission of two per cent upon all expenditure by the war department, such commission, however, not to exceed in the whole £20,000; and they were to be entitled to a further sum not exceeding £20,000 if the railways should be satisfactorily completed in the judgment of the secretary of state. There was a condition that the contract should not be sub-let.

The extent of the railway had been computed at 280 miles. In the face of an enemy nothing like an actual contract could have been entered into, and the position occupied by Messrs. Lucas and Aird was only that of agents of the government. The advance into the country and the plotting out of the course of the line were to be accomplished by the Royal Engineers and a military force under an officer of the highest rank. The country rises gradually from the sea-coast to Ariab, where a fortified post of some magnitude was likely to be established. As the military force advanced the agents' navvies, having under them hired native men of the district, would make the needful cuttings and clearances, and lay the line in a substantial manner at the rate of from twenty to twenty-five miles a week, if all went favourably and well. As the line was laid the constructors' locomotives were to traverse it, bringing up stores and materials. At this rate the entire line would occupy rather over fourteen weeks, or, taking into consideration very probable delays, it was expected that the railway from Suakim to Berber would occupy in its completion about four or five months, and that troops and stores would be passed over it in the autumn, or about July or August. The plant and materials for the construction were to be sent out by government transports in sections, each perfectly complete with sleepers, rails, points, and crossings. A couple of hundred picked navvies and platelayers were ready to sail. The route determined upon followed the sites of numerous wells, and it was decided to convey water to the line when possible by a system of pipes.

This, then, was the line which was not only to open the route to Berber, and so give us a military position that would, at all events, secure the protection of the Eastern Soudan, but would eventually open up the country to commerce and be instrumental in inaugurating a new era. Of course a large staff of engineers and clerks was required as well as the navvies and workmen, and the material necessary for a section of five miles included a locomotive, ballast trucks, a large number of broad and narrow trolleys, two of which were for the electric light, twelve water-tanks, six steam-boilers, six pumps, some 14,000 feet of water-pipe of various sizes, 830 tons of rails, 15,000 sleepers, numbers of points and crossings, fifty tons of cement, deals, timbers, planks and boarding, a vast quantity of tools and apparatus, coal, clothing, furniture, detonating material, portable and other engines, besides three huts and a supply of

provisions, clothing, furniture, water-condensing apparatus, and innumerable fittings and appliances.

All was soon ready, however, and Mr. Charles Lucas, jun., and Mr. Basil Ellis started for the seat of war in the same mail steamer, from Brindisi, that was to carry General Sir G. Graham. This arrived at Alexandria on the 26th of February, and they immediately went on to Cairo, where, however, the general was detained for a short time because of an accidental injury to his ankle, which prevented him reaching Suakim till the 12th of March, when he arrived in the *Lydian Monarch* with the 5th Royal Irish Lancers.

At that time the arrangements for the troops under Lord Wolseley, during the summer, were to make Dongola the headquarters, the main body of the force remaining in camp at Korti; the mudir's troops to be stationed at Merawi, with, perhaps, the Black Watch, a troop of hussars, and two guns. Two movable columns were to be formed ready to take the field at any moment, one of them consisting of General Dormer's brigade of three battalions of infantry, a troop of hussars, and four guns, to be encamped near Debbah; the other, under the command of General Brackenbury, to be posted somewhere between Debbah and Handak; and the heavy camel corps to be encamped opposite the Hannek Cataracts. The troops were to be provided with huts of mud and reeds, as in the summer months the heat, already increasing, would be insupportable.

For some time previously the rebels, though they had ceased to make night attacks on Suakim, had showed amazing audacity in creeping down the gullies at night and filling up the trenches of the advanced works after the fatigue parties had retired for the day. It was therefore determined to lay some small mines outside the line of the advanced redoubts; but even these were unavailing, for the Arabs contrived to enter the works without exploding them. Lieutenant Askwith of the engineers, who was charged with the mining operations, therefore went out to examine and make some alterations in them, when that which he was examining exploded and blew him to pieces. This accident caused much sorrow in the camp, for the officer had been remarkable for his zeal and energy, and had taken an active part in all the work performed by the engineers since the departure of General Graham's former expedition. But another series of attacks exhibiting still greater audacity and cunning on the part of the enemy soon began to disturb the camp, the plan and disposition of which was not such as to secure it against night surprises. The formation of the camp placed the Guards brigade, consisting of the Coldstreams, Scots Guards, and Grenadiers, in rear of the west redoubt, a small fort which formed the most advanced post on the Suakim-Berber road; behind them was the Berkshire Regiment, and on the left of the Guards brigade was a large unoccupied gap; then came the camps of the Shropshire and East Surrey

Regiments, and then another gap between them and the right water fort. A line drawn between the west redoubt and the right water fort would have represented the front, but there was no continuity of the camps that lay along it; and the same may be said of the right flank, represented by a line from the west redoubt to the ordnance store, when there was a great gap between the ordnance store and the nearest camp. A third line from the water fort to the camp of the Indian contingent south-west of the town may be said to have represented the left flank, with a great gap facing the south. In rear of these advanced lines were the marines, royal horse artillery, hussars, headquarters camp, and camp of the army hospital corps, separated by considerable spaces, intersected by shallow gullies, through which the lithe and half-naked savages could silently creep into the camps undeterred by the line of pickets, which was also broken into too wide intervals to prevent the enemy from stealing in at night, while when an alarm was given each camp was in danger from the fire of the next, and the Arabs having speared or stabbed some of our sleeping men in the tents, or made a sudden rush on a body of those who were resting and off duty, would escape in the darkness, mostly carrying away their own dead and wounded. The electric light which was turned on from the *Dolphin* only served to throw up into strong relief every tent of the camp and every moving figure for a few seconds, and then left everything in blacker darkness than before.

On the 7th March the assassinations were commenced by some Arabs who crept into the lines of the headquarter camp and stole the provost-marshal's horse, after stabbing his servant in five places. The screams of the poor fellow roused the men, and the officers of the staff were all rushing about in confusion. After this more precautions were taken, but the disposition of the camp precluded any really effective measures, and when our men turned out and began to fire, their bullets were often as dangerous to their neighbouring comrades as to the enemy.

It was a harassing time. The heat, almost unbearable, was aggravated by sand-storms which filled the eyes and plastered the faces of the men with fine dust that stuck in a pasty deposit to their perspiring skins. There was, on the whole, no serious want of water, and even when the advance was made the men were on a fair allowance. The condensing apparatus was set to work, the wells were deepened, and a regular water-transport service was organized under the command of Major De Cosson, who with his staff of assistants set himself to this most necessary work with untiring energy and great success.

In Suakim itself stores had been opened by some Greeks, where both eatables and drinkables could be procured at a comparatively reasonable rate; but of course in camp, and especially at the advanced posts, there were few luxuries, and the supply of ordinary rations was all that could be

secured. Not only did the intense heat and the dust or fine sand exhaust the men, but the stench of the dead bodies of men and camels that pervaded the camp was sickening. The corpses of our own slain were buried, but it was not possible to bury those of the Arabs, which lay at a distance and in various directions. The shifting sand, too, would not for any length of time cover a dead camel unless at a very great depth, and sometimes in a few hours the wind would lay bare portions of putrefying carcasses, to which earth would have acted as a deodorizer and resolvent, but on which the sand had no effect except to conceal the rotting mass until it was dried to a hard mummy. Suakim, with its Arab graveyard, its collection of offal and decaying rubbish, and its dirty streets, was bad enough; the camel dépôt, with its multitude of groaning beasts crowded together and giving forth their own peculiar stench, was not pleasant; but the camp presented almost inevitable difficulties in maintaining a sanitary condition. It was not till the carcasses of the camels that had died or were slain by the enemy were hauled for some distance beyond the camp in the direction of the wind, and there buried, that the air was cleared of what seemed to threaten to add pestilence to the fever and exhaustion that came of constant exertion, intense and almost unmitigated heat, broken rest, anxiety, and the hardships of camp life in a climate where the work of forming a line of railway, advancing on a savage and unscrupulous foe, and fighting a series of battles, was to be achieved by a force of between 8000 and 9000 men of various arms, aided by about 2000 drivers, labourers, grass-cutters, and others.

On the night of the 11th March a few shots were heard along the front, a circumstance so common that the men who were not in that direction turned in as usual. Only for a short time, however, for there was soon a sound of rushing feet, a hoarse cry to turn out, the sound of bugles, and the pickets coming in, while flashes of the rifles and the *whish* of the bullets went all along the line, soon to become a fast and continuous firing, amidst which the guns of the *Dolphin* boomed, their shots going into the desert, and the electric light flashed out, throwing all the tents, the groups of men at their posts, and the various objects of the camp into momentary definition; while the rifle bullets were cutting the ground, and sentries, returning patrols, and men in opposing directions were in extreme danger of shooting each other in mistake for the enemy, both before and after the sudden illumination. The enemy had made a general assault all round, and the ordnance store had been marked for special attack while the skirmish was going on. That attack was led by a gigantic negro who had formerly been a porter at the wharf at Suakim, and was now under the name of Abdul Ahad ("Abdul the Lion"), standard-bearer to Osman Digma. The locality of the ordnance store and dépôt was well known to the enemy, and they were not slow to perceive that if it could be destroyed our troops would be

placed at a serious disadvantage. The officer in charge of the store had posted his guards, retired to his tent and gone to bed, the guard was sleeping in the guard tent, and the sentries were pacing up and down listening to the sound of the firing a mile and a half away, and not suspecting that any Arabs would come from the expanse of desert on the north side of the store, which was commanded by the guns of the ships. A dark figure suddenly came out from the shadow of the pier, and to the challenge "Who goes there?" the reply came "Friend," probably from the gigantic negro, who had, no doubt, learned a few words of English when he worked at the wharf at Suakim. At anyrate, while the sentry hesitated the black was upon him and cut him down with one of those terrible two-handed swords which, wielded by powerful arms, will cut half through wood and metal of a rifle stock, and will shear off a head at a single blow. Another sentry, who ran up to help his comrade, was also killed, and about fifty Arabs, who had by that time crept round the shore under shadow of the pier, bounded forward and made a rush for the guard tent. But the men inside were not of the stuff to be taken so easily. They were men of the Berkshire Regiment, and though there were but fifteen of them, and in the desperate struggle that ensued one was killed and nine were wounded, they closed with the enemy, who, finding that they were being beaten, ran from the tent, and skirting the camp, which they entered at another point, rushed through the store stabbing at all they came near; and finally retreated, carrying with them their dead and wounded. But the body of their leader, the gigantic Abdul Ahad, who had been killed by a bayonet thrust, they left behind in their haste, for they had heard the sound of a boat being lowered from the *Dolphin*, and at the same moment the electric light flashed out. It appears that a rumour, of course unfounded, had reached the rebel camp that the Sikhs burned the bodies of their slain enemies; and it was reported that Osman Digma, who bitterly lamented the loss of his standard-bearer, offered not only to pay a considerable sum of money, but to put an end to all further night attacks, if the body were restored to him, as it is regarded as a reproach to an Arab to be called "a son of a burned father."

The attempts of small parties of the enemy to crawl into the camp were continued, and on two or three occasions they succeeded in getting into a tent after watching the sentry to the end of his beat, and having stabbed the men of the guard who were lying asleep, vanished in the black Egyptian darkness before the death screams of their victims had ceased to startle and horrify the camp. Major De Cosson says: "The nearly naked Hadendowas, with bare feet and greased skins, as dusky as the night, crept and glided on their faces along every hollow and gully, carefully taking advantage of each bush or tuft of reeds that could screen their approach, and, if alarmed, lying perfectly still after casting the sand with a rapid noiseless motion over their prostrate bodies, so that the keenest eye could

hardly detect them from a stone. When they wished to make a sign to each other they imitated the cry of the desert birds with marvellous fidelity, and often has this low plaintive cry been the signal for their onslaught. Sometimes it was a volley followed by a rush with swords and spears, but more often a dark figure would seem to rise out of the very ground at the sentry's feet and stab him in the back; or if it was impossible to get sufficiently near to him unperceived they would wait till he moved away on his beat, knowing well his exact position by the crunching of his heavy ammunition boots on the gravel, and wriggling past like serpents slip among the tents; then would follow the death scream, the rush of feet, and fierce volleys poured in rapid succession into the night after a few shadowy forms disappearing in the darkness, content at having achieved their work of murder and mutilation. This would be the signal for a general alarm along the whole line; the Arabs further out in the desert would open fire with their Remingtons, bullets would come whizzing into the camp in all directions, and the force be kept on the alert until the long hours of the night passed away and the sun rose on another day of incessant work at the wharves and trenches for men who had enjoyed no sleep."

After the arrival of General Graham on the 12th March many changes were made on the position and relative situation of the camps, by which the danger caused by these night attacks was much diminished; and still later, defences were constructed at certain points, including stockades or seribas of the thorny mimosa, rope and wire entanglements, and trenches formed for shelter.

On the 16th March the laying of the railway was commenced, and the camp was entirely remodelled. Sir Gerald Graham's despatch from headquarters to Lord Hartington said that spies had reported Tamai to be held by about 7000 men, and that a force of 1000 to 1200 was at Hasheen, while Tokar was held by a small force, and Handoub probably by a weak detachment. The 20th Hussars had disembarked that day. The artillery, the mounted infantry, and the Australian contingent had not arrived, and the horse-artillery battery was incomplete. As soon as the force was complete and the water transport and field storage arrangements were fully organized he intended to move at once. There was great difficulty in obtaining a sufficient supply of water-tanks and tins; but on Major De Cosson being asked if he would undertake to put 13,000 gallons of water into the field at daybreak on the 20th he said he would, and the task was completed though sufficient men could not be spared—or *were not* spared—to assist in the work, and the officers and some Egyptian soldiers lent for the purpose by Colonel Chermiside, the governor-general of the Red Sea littoral, were not particularly effective.

Though at this date the professed plan of campaign was promptly to



construct the railway in detachments which would allow complete protection to be afforded to the work as it went on, and strong posts to be established both at the furthest points to which it progressed and at the base of supplies, there were signs that this plan might have to be deferred, and that, though a small portion of the line would be completed, the advance of the troops from the camp at Suakim to engage the forces of Osman Digma would be made without waiting for the concurrent construction of the line to the point where an engagement might take place.

The services of some scouts belonging to friendly tribes were utilized, two of them being at night posted in each redoubt. Their keen sight rendered them valuable assistants to our sentries. Half of the men of each battalion and regiment were kept under arms all night.

There was every reason why an advance should be made at once. It was essential that as a first step Osman Digma—who it was reported was about to be reinforced by 7000 dervishes—should be defeated and his forces dispersed. In the second place, the intended line of the railway must coincide with the line of advance in order that the construction of the line might be protected. In the third place, it was desirable that the troops should be quartered during the summer in a healthy elevated spot well supplied with water. Sinkat or Ariab were regarded as the places best adapted for Sir Gerald Graham's immediate destination. The road to Sinkat passed near the spot where Osman Digma's force was for the most part concentrated, and where, apparently, he meant to accept battle. It was formerly a summer resort of the inhabitants of Suakim, is 3088 feet above the level of the sea, and is in every way fitted for a summer cantonment. Its distance from Suakim is about forty miles. Tamai is not quite half-way.

As we have seen, from Suakim Island the road crosses a causeway to the mainland, leading thence in a south-westerly direction to the wells about a mile inland which supply the town with water, and are the point of departure for the caravan route, which, for eleven miles, in a north-westerly direction crosses a level plain covered with gravel and small boulders. This plain, rising slightly from the sea, is traversed by the beds of numerous torrents which flow from the mountains during the rains. As the surface is stony and the slope gentle these water-courses are never deep or abrupt, and the only vegetation is that of the small acacia scattered over the plain. On reaching Handoub, 12½ miles, the road passes the first point of a high spur which runs out from the main range of the Waratab Mountains towards the coast. The wells of Handoub are in the lower features of the spur; there are five wells, one of sweet water, the others with brackish. In the bed of the Khor the wells are 18 inches deep and are also brackish. This is the Hadendowa country; and for five miles further the route continues across the same hard, barren, boulder-strewn plain to a point

where the Wady Otao debouches on to the coast plains. To enter the mountain pass on the way to Sinkat is a refreshing change from the arid heat of the desert, as the journey is 3000 feet above sea-level, and on the sides of the mountains towards the sea there are many plants and shrubs, but the other side consists of bare rocks with only the lowest parts of the valleys covered with any verdure. Passing through such valleys Sinkat is reached, some forty miles from Suakim, and it was thought that the army would penetrate to this place and there take up summer quarters. The line of railway—the line from Suakim to Berber, had, however, to be considered, and this route was to Handoub and thence to Otao,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Handoub and 17 from Suakim, where the way passes into the mountains, the under-features on either side being from  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles distant, rocky and abrupt, while the view behind them is limited by rugged mountains rising to 1000 and 1500 feet above sea-level. The wady is little more than the boulder bed of a mountain torrent, the two wells of brackish water being ordinarily about enough for 250 men and as many horses.

About four miles further the Wady Sinkat is reached, inclosed by high and rugged mountains; but the next point in the route which was the proposed course of the advance is Tambouk,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Otao.

At the time that the railway from Suakim was commenced there were already evidences that active measures might be ordered for the purpose of forcing Osman Digma to come to a battle. The hot season was advancing, the forces under Lord Wolseley had been reduced by battle and sickness, and there was much fear that they might be still further diminished by remaining in such a climate; while people who knew what the summer around Suakim was like, urgently declared that our army there would melt away with fever and exhaustion unless steps were taken to occupy some position where the temperature would be more suited to Europeans. Added to this a political crisis appeared to be approaching. The government still held its own, but proposals for votes of censure, though they are not carried, have a certain significance, and there were troubles in Burmah, troubles on the Afghan frontier, small troubles in Canada where rebel half-breeds were committing atrocities, troubles still in Ireland.

Sagacious people began to discern that it would be best for all concerned, for Egypt and for England, to make some decisive effort to defeat Osman Digma, and then reverting to the original policy of leaving Khartûm and the Southern Soudan, and retaining only a sufficient force to hold Suakim and the Red Sea coast, with the Italians at Massowa, and, as it was hoped, with friendly tribes aided by Abyssinians and our old acquaintance Ras. Aloula, holding the country round Kassala, to retire our army from Suakim and from other places, after providing for the protection of the Egyptian territory at Wady Halfa, and at other points within the



CAMP OF THE SCOTS GUARDS AT OTAO. SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY.

APRIL, 1885.



boundary originally settled before we had consented to interpose by sending Gordon to Khartûm.

There were, of course, strong objections to the adoption of a course which appeared to be an acknowledgment of weakness and failure. What should we have accomplished after all the preparation, the expenditure of energy which had surmounted what seemed to be insuperable natural obstacles, battles in which our men had defeated their savage foes, the despatch of a small heroic army which, after having done so much, was to learn that its sacrifices, its determined and conspicuous valour, had been a mere empty display, and that it was to accept what looked like final defeat from an enemy who could not be reached, but whose power had been shown in the desert, at Metammeh, at Kirbekan, and on the Red Sea coast. The power was that of savage attacks and retreats which would wear out a disciplined host by the mere repetition of fights that were not actual engagements, but mere wild onslaughts, to be repelled, defeated, and repeated for days and weeks and months at every point to which we might advance with the intention of provoking the enemy to bring a force into the field and fight a decisive battle.

It is no part of the province of this narrative to discuss the question of the campaign, nor to say more than has been noted already in previous pages of the contentions that the expedition to the Soudan was, in the first instance, too small, too late, and too indefinitely authorized.

In March, 1885, the situation was doubtful, but there was at the same time a general feeling that the campaign would be resumed in the autumn, and that something would yet be done to "smash the Mahdi" and Osman Digma. For the British troops in the Soudan the prospect was not a very pleasant one for the next five or six months. A summer in the Soudan desert was more to be dreaded than all the Mahdi's forces in battle array. Of course, it must and could be done. British troops faced the fierce heat of the Indian plains during the Mutiny, and they could do so in the Soudan; but the long weary months of inactivity in mud huts under the sweltering heat of the desert were enough to dismay any but the stoutest hearts.

Those who believed that the expedition should not be abandoned because of the fall of Khartûm and the death of General Gordon, argued that the probable plan of campaign would be to establish fortified camps along the Nile banks from Merawi to Abu Fatmeh or Dongola. Mud huts to be built and the healthiest spots chosen for the camp. The positions whence the caravan routes terminate at the river to be held in force, and every effort made to have everything in readiness for an advance in the autumn. The railway from Wady Halfa to be pushed on as far as possible, probably to Absarat, so as to pass the worst part of the cataracts of the formidable "Belly of Stone." Stores, provisions, munitions, and men to be pushed as far up and as quickly as possible, and several more of the useful

Yarrow boats sent up and put together all ready to take advantage of the first rise of the Nile. A corps of friendly Kabbabish Arabs to be enrolled, and to aid our troops in scouting and doing work in the desert during the great heat of summer. Meanwhile, it was hoped that the strong force at Suakim would have time to inflict a crushing blow upon Osman Digma before the hot weather came on, and that friendly relations might be established with the Hadendowas. A light line of railway, even if only pushed half-way across the desert, would, it was contended, render the transit of a strong force across the route to Berber perfectly feasible in the autumn. Once the Nile had fairly risen, about the latter end of August, the whole of the troops might advance on Berber, up Nile and from Suakim, combine there, and advance on Khartûm. The issue of the struggle could never be for a moment doubtful, but it would be sharp and fierce. It was rightly said that a soldier should have no politics; and this was especially the rule with the British army and soldier. He would fight, as he only can fight, and give his life without question or murmur for his queen and country; but what he did hope and ask for was that all his efforts and sacrifices might not be made for an empty idea, and the fruits of his hard-won victory abandoned at once and handed over to whomsoever chose to avail himself of it.

This was the line of representation that was probably the most popular, but it may be said here that the conditions which prevented—or which were accepted as preventing—the government from carrying out the plan of campaign were afterwards endorsed, not only by the public, but by the ministry which came into power. If those conditions had arisen from a series of mistakes, and especially the initial mistake of the despatch of Gordon to Khartûm, the results were eventually regarded as inevitable, and any attempt to do more for the honour or the interest of England, the protection of the khedive's authority, or the punishment of the rebels in the Soudan, was thought to be futile, or, at all events, unprofitable to any satisfactory end, even if large reinforcements could be sent to General Lord Wolseley to enable him to prosecute an autumn campaign.

What were the intentions of the Mahdi could not be discovered. He, like Osman Digma, took good care not to expose himself to danger, and there were repeated reports of disaffection among some of the chiefs, who had recently begun to find that he could not do quite as much as he had promised. In Kordofan especially there was opposition, for there a rival Mahdi had declared himself, one El Senoussi from Darfûr, who denounced Mohammed Achmed as a false prophet who did not obey the laws of the Koran. It was rumoured, too, that Khalifa Abdullah, the Mahdi's principal chief, had seceded with many of the Baggaras, that the spoil from Khartûm had been taken to Abbas Island, and that food was so scarce that the natives had been obliged to eat the pith of the palm-trees.

There was no such general falling asunder of the rebellion as to enable us to take advantage of it at that season of the year even if our forces had been adequate. Among the more significant events that happened about that time was the arrest of Zebehr Pasha. Whether Gordon was right in having suddenly turned to the opinion that Zebehr could be induced to render effectual aid in suppressing the revolt of the Mahdi and his followers is still a question for argument, but perhaps it was a more certain conclusion that whether Zebehr would have co-operated with Gordon at Khartûm or not, he became practically dangerous when he found that he was not to be employed. He might not have consented to go, but the refusal to permit him to do so was another slight which he was likely to take an opportunity to resent, and Lord Wolseley received information which induced him to advise that the ex-slave-hunting and slave-holding pasha should be arrested.

General Lennox, who was on a visit at Cairo, was suddenly sent back. The secret was well kept. The military police waited near Zebehr's house, at a *café* opposite, and at five o'clock in the afternoon of the 14th of March he was arrested as he was coming out. He appeared surprised, but offered no resistance, and was taken on board the *Iris*. His two sons, one adopted son, and one of his friends came down the same night from Cairo, also in charge of the police, and were taken on board the same steamer, which sailed next morning at eleven o'clock with sealed orders to Gibraltar.

This action was exclusively that of the English military authorities, and was taken on the recommendation of Lord Wolseley, with Sir Evelyn Baring's consent; and it was remarked at the time that it was at least singular that the English authorities, who refused to try Arabi, a prisoner of war, should arrest and deport Zebehr without formal inquiry.

Orders were given for the advance to be made from Suakim to Hasheen on the 20th of March, much to the delight of the camp. The men, who had been harassed by night attacks and alarms, were weary with daily toil and sick of remaining within the limited space which they occupied amidst a pestilent atmosphere and under extremely unhealthy conditions, but the prospect of an active engagement with the enemy revived them immediately. A reconnaissance of the village and the wells had been made on the previous day by a cavalry brigade, a battery brigade of the Royal Horse Artillery, and the Mounted Infantry supported by the Indian contingent.

As the cavalry advanced the enemy's scouts on the nearest hills fell back and joined the main body of the Arabs at Hasheen, where considerable numbers were seen to retreat up the valley, whence they disappeared among the mountains, leaving only small parties of men on camels, who

were acting as videttes. A few shots were fired from the top of a large hill called Dihilbat, and a small party of Hadendowas charged down on a patrol of the 20th Hussars, killing one of the men and wounding a sergeant. Lieutenant Birch of the mounted infantry, who had climbed a spur of the hill to get a better view, was attacked by five or six Arabs who were in hiding, and he only escaped after a sharp tussle in which he defended himself stoutly though he had a spear wound in the shoulder. The reconnoitring force reached the village without further opposition, but found only twenty or thirty rude huts made of grass and matting, which had been recently cleared out, nothing of any importance being discovered but three Remington rifles and a few cartridges. There were only two wells containing about seven feet of fairly good water, ten feet below the surface. Before noon the reconnaissance was completed, and the cavalry and mounted infantry, being covered by the horse artillery stationed on a low hill whence they could command the plain, retired in order. By half-past twelve all the men were in camp again. A letter addressed to Osman Digma was left stuck on a cleft stick near the village. It was a reply to a boastful letter sent by him to our camp a fortnight before, in which he referred to the power and success of the Mahdi, and the defeats of Hicks and Baker, and exhorted our generals to submit and to become Mohammedans. In answer to this he was reminded of the fact that he had been several times defeated and that events had proved the inability of the Mahdi's troops to withstand the British, and he in turn was exhorted to surrender. This letter was found next day trampled in the dirt, but whether he to whom it was addressed had ever read it there were no means of knowing.

Though the climate is exhausting and the conditions of the camp were in many respects revolting, daybreak when witnessed in the desert is a lovely spectacle, and especially in the open country, dotted with mimosa scrub and here and there a tree. At half-past five in the morning the whole force moved out with the exception of the 53d (the Shropshire Regiment), which remained behind to guard the camp.

Ring-doves, larks, and the small birds of the wilderness were singing their morning song and flitting hither and thither quite regardless of the moving body of armed men, who, as they went in glittering array across the bright and level plain, formed a brilliant spectacle.

The formation was an open square. The guards formed the right, marching in quarter column of companies. The second brigade formed the front in columns of fours. The native infantry were upon the left flank. The artillery, the mule-battery of six Gardner guns, the ambulance and transport were in the centre. The cavalry and mounted infantry were opened out in advance of the square, which reached the first ridge of hills at half-past eight o'clock, the enemy who occupied them retiring upon our



advance. The 70th Regiment (the East Surrey) set to work at once to construct four sand-bag redoubts, with seribas on the summits, on the left of the line of advance. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when the Berkshire Regiment reached the foot of Dihilbat Hill, which rose sheer above them like a wall, the enemy clustering on its rocky summit. Without firing a shot the men of this splendid regiment began to swarm up the side of the mountain in attack formation and preserving their line unbroken, while two battalions of marines followed a little in rear as supports. The foremost spur of the mountain was separated from the summit by a deep ravine about half-way up, and on reaching the edge of this the gallant Berkshires paused in their rapid ascent and opened fired so steadily that the roll of their musketry could be heard echoing from the surrounding hills. The enemy returned the fire for a time, but the marines advanced so as to enfilade their position, and the Arabs then wavered and ran, the Berkshire men crossing the ravine and gaining the summit. The Indian infantry deployed and advanced upon the village of Hasheen, the brigade of guards, formed in square, covering their rear; while the mounted infantry on the extreme right scoured the thick bush, whence small bodies of the enemy were keeping up a brisk fire upon the advancing Indian brigade.

The battery of artillery took up their position on a saddle-shaped hill, and cleared off the enemy on the right flank with shell and shrapnel; and while this was going on, a large body of the rebels, driven from the hills on the left by the advance of the marines and 49th, descended into the plain on the other side, and a detachment of the Bengal Lancers was despatched to intercept them. The rebels, instead of flying, stood their ground with extraordinary boldness, and charged the cavalry as they advanced. When the collision came they practised the same tactics as at El Teb, throwing themselves on the ground, and slashing at the horses' legs with their swords. After a severe hand-to-hand fight the lancers were obliged to fall back, losing four of their men, whose horses were hamstringed by the enemy, and whose bodies could not be recovered.

The Indian infantry had reached Hasheen, and were now formed in two sides of a square, their left resting on a ridge, and the brigade of guards in complete square covering their rear. On either flank the cavalry were skirmishing over the bush-covered plain, while groups of the enemy, in numbers from ten to a hundred strong, were swarming all round, on the slopes of the hills, in the thick undergrowth in the valley, and amongst the mimosa bushes scattered over the plain. One party of about a hundred and fifty strong suddenly debouched from behind a hill within three hundred yards of the guards, and actually charged down upon the brigade. They were received by such a withering volley from the face of the square that those who survived it at once turned and fled, leaving their wounded

chief, a mere youth, who had approached on a white hygeen (riding camel), which had fallen dead, within thirty yards of the square. The chief was at once made prisoner.

While this party were charging the square, the general, from his position on rising ground, saw a large body of the Arabs, some three thousand strong, lying down in the rear at the spot whence the advanced party had charged. They were rising to follow up the attack, but the terrible effect of the volleys of the guards on the advanced party checked their advance, and they abstained from the intended onslaught. On the extreme right rear of the main force another party tried to break through in the direction of the redoubts which the 70th were constructing, making way between them and the hillock upon which the general with his staff had taken up their position. The 5th Lancers, 20th Hussars, Mounted Infantry, and a troop of the Indian Lancers swooped down upon them and almost exterminated the band, most of them being shot down by the carbines of the cavalry, who swept over them as they lay on the ground endeavouring to repeat their former successful tactics. Only seven of the whole body made their escape.

This work was not performed without loss. Major Robertson of the Bengal Lancers, and Major Harvey of the 5th Lancers, were both severely wounded, while Sergeant-major Nicholls, who had only that morning been promoted to that rank, was killed. Four privates were killed and seven were wounded. General Ewart had a narrow escape, as his horse was killed under him. While this brilliant charge was being made, the artillery opened a heavy fire upon two large bodies of the enemy, of which one, some two thousand strong, was retreating in front, while the other, of double that strength, was on our left rear, having arrived on the scene of action from Tamai. At about one o'clock the second brigade and the Indian Infantry were ordered to fall back upon the guards, and at two o'clock the whole force began their march back towards the hill occupied by the 70th Regiment. The Indian brigade this time formed the advance. They were followed by the 46th and marines, while the guards, still in square, with the artillery, ambulance, and transport in their centre, brought up the rear. The position was by no means a pleasant one, for the enemy swarmed around, and the square, encumbered with its *impedimenta*, had to fight its way over ground covered with dense bush, the Arabs closing in on all sides, but chiefly in the rear and left flank. For half an hour the Scots Fusiliers and Coldstreams had to endure a very heavy fire from the almost invisible enemy, halting every two hundred yards to fire volleys into the scrub. The guards were, however, perfectly steady, moving on under the galling firing with admirable coolness, and in three quarters of an hour they emerged from the bushes into a comparatively open country. Captain Dallison, of the Scots Fusiliers, was killed, shot through the heart.

The loss was extraordinarily small, considering the fire to which the men had been exposed. The aim of the enemy was very bad, for a storm of bullets swept about the square, the great proportion flying overhead. At three o'clock the force reached the first ridge, where the 70th had now completed the redoubts and seribas. Here a halt was made for lunch, which was served out with great celerity to the troops, in half-companies.

The soldiers were much exhausted after marching and fighting for nine hours and a half under the blazing sun, and a long halt was given them before they started for camp. Leaving the 70th, with two guns and four Gardners, to hold the redoubts, the whole force now set off on their return march, reaching the camp again at about seven in the evening. It is not within our province to discuss either the tactics employed in the Suakim campaign, or the question whether by advancing to attack the Arab horde at successive stages on the route which it was proposed to open through the country and returning to camp after each engagement, any such decisive result was effected as would have been achieved if our forces could have followed the construction of the line of railway and held the positions from which Osman Digma's followers were driven. That a very strong opinion prevailed on the latter point is quite certain; but it had become evident that the desire to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy and immediately to scatter the Arab forces was regarded as of more immediate importance than the construction of the railway, while it was considered dangerous to advance the force with all necessary supplies of water and rations to a point where it would not be in ready communication with the base at Suakim. The battle of Hasheen had cost the enemy dear, but it had cost us dear also. The loss of Captain Dallison and of Surgeon-major Lane, who was mortally wounded by a shot and died a day or two afterwards in the arms of the chaplain at Suakim, was felt deeply by all the officers; but it was reported next day that there were about twenty-two (officers and men) killed in the engagement and forty-three officers and men wounded. Neither the numbers of those who fell nor the intended plan of action were made known in the camp; indeed as regarded the latter it seemed as though the general was awaiting orders or suggestions from the government, and after events appeared to justify this conclusion. At anyrate there was no delay in making another advance, and the despatch issued by General Graham at a much later date (the 30th of May) gave the key to the operations which had by that time been concluded and the campaign brought to an end. That despatch said:

"The secretary of state for war directed me to organize a field force, and to make such transport arrangements as were possible so as to secure first the most pressing object of the campaign, viz. the destruction of the power of Osman Digma.

I was directed to arrange next for the military occupation of the Hadendowa territory, lying near the Suakim-Berber route, so as to enable the contractors to proceed with the railway which it was proposed to construct from Suakim to Berber. In the secretary of state's letter of the 27th February, 1885, my attention was again drawn to the necessity for rapidly constructing this railway. The direction of the works was to be entirely under my orders, their details and execution being in the hands of the contractors."

The destruction of the power of Osman Digma was the first consideration, and it was understood that General Graham was directed to attack all the positions occupied by the enemy and to disperse Osman Digma's troops. Lord Wolseley had at the end of February telegraphed to Lord Hartington: "It is important to crush Osman Digma and restore peace to the country now under his influence in order to push forward the railway, and, by a brilliant success near Suakim, to make the Soudanese realize what they must expect when we move forward in the autumn."

It may be taken for granted that the success of pressing operations by advancing against Osman Digma would depend on whether he would accept a battle which might be decisive, instead of retreating before our force and reoccupying the ground as far as possible when we retired after a fight which only temporarily dispersed his followers. Instead of coming to a decisive engagement, however, he appeared to adopt the plan of endeavouring to draw us further and further in pursuit until we reached the mountains, where he could engage us in harassing warfare, and make repeated attacks for the purpose of cutting off supplies and indefinitely prolonging hostilities throughout the hot season. At anyrate, the necessity for endeavouring to strike a decisive blow led to preparations for an advance in force, to the temporary abandonment of the construction of the railway, of which on the 6th of April, when work was recommenced, only two miles and a half of permanent way had been laid, that is to say, a month had necessarily elapsed before the work had extended beyond our own lines.

A seriba had been formed at Hasheen by the engineers and Madras Sappers, three small redoubts occupied the top of the long hill at one end of it, and a fourth a conical hill at the other end, where a heliograph station kept up communication with Suakim; but after the fight the enemy gradually occupied their former position on the Dihilbat Hill, where they were fired at by the guns in the redoubts whenever they showed themselves. The East Surrey Regiment, under Colonel Ralston, was left with five days' supplies to hold the seriba and the redoubts, from which, however, they were recalled on the 25th of March when the Arabs came back, and Osman Digma was reported to have made out that we were obliged to retire and leave him in possession, so that he claimed a

victory. At anyrate, the enemy were not much disheartened, as was shown by the furious attack they made upon the force which marched from Suakim to establish a position at Tofrek in what was known as Baker's seriba. This movement was made before the position at Hasheen was abandoned. It had been determined to march on Tamai without further delay, and as the distance from Suakim was too great for troops to make the journey and return to Suakim in one day, it was decided to establish two seribas on the line of advance, one four miles and the other eight miles from Suakim.

On Sunday the 22d of March the officers and men of the transport service were up at two o'clock A.M., and at daybreak were on the way with a convoy of 1500 baggage animals, consisting of 580 camels with 11,500 gallons of water, 500 camels with supplies, and about 400 pack-mules, draft-horses, and baggage-camels, with commissariat, water-tanks, ammunition, and ambulance; a vast unwieldy column, with a large number of native drivers.

This convoy filled the hollow square formed by the Indian contingent, which was preceded by a squadron of lancers and columns of infantry. By six o'clock A.M. the advance towards Tamai was made, the lancers scouting in front, then thirty of the naval brigade with four Gardner guns, a detachment of royal engineers with field telegraph, the telegraph wagon uncoiling its wire as they went, a battalion each of the Berkshire and the royal marine light infantry. This was the first square, with spare ammunition and water-carts in the centre. The second square, following on the right rear, consisted of a company of Madras Sappers, the 15th Sikhs, 28th Bombay Native Infantry, 17th Bengal Native Infantry and all the transport, the 20th Hussars patrolling in the rear to keep open the line of communication to Suakim. This force was under the command of Sir John M'Neill, with General Hudson in charge of the Indian contingent.

It was terrible work to get the vast convoy of animals along in the midst of intervening thorn bushes, and the progress was very slow, while the tremendous heat and the thick cloud of dust that rose in the midst of the square added to the difficulty of the dense scrub, and the camels became almost unmanageable. It soon became obvious that the original plan could not be carried out, as if the force advanced eight miles there would not be daylight to form the seriba and for the Indian brigade to return. Sir John M'Neill therefore determined to halt at six miles and there to form one seriba. At half-past ten o'clock the force emerged on a fairly open space of sandy and gravelly ground, apparently about 300 to 400 yards across, dotted with thorn bushes and surrounded by thick bush and scrub, from which, as well as from the thorn bushes, material was cut to form a seriba, consisting, as usual, of a hedge of about four feet high with a two-foot ditch behind. It was a triple seriba—three inclosures of

diamond shape standing corner to corner, the farthest corner in the direction of Tamai and the nearest in that of Suakim. At each of these two corners were to be a sand-bag redoubt, ditch, and parapet for two Gardner guns; that nearest Suakim was for the royal marines and half the naval brigade, the centre space of the next division for the camels, the third nearer Tamai for the Berkshire, two Gardner guns, and the other half of the naval brigade.

It cannot be said that there was no idea of the probability of an attack in force being made by the enemy, because there had been a rumour of some such intention; but there had been many other rumours, and as on the advance no considerable bodies of Arabs had been seen (though it was afterwards reported that the look-out from the ships and the station at Suakim had noted considerable numbers of the enemy in the desert), no immediate expectation of an assault was entertained. It was also said, however, that a spy had actually reported that Osman would hazard another battle, and that on the morning of the 22d it was reported to the interpreter of the intelligence department that an attack by 5000 Arabs was about to take place. Whether this was so or not there was subsequently an impression that warning of the concentration of Osman's troops on the flank of the advancing force might have been given. As it was, though the force was accompanied by two mounted "friendlies," who acted as scouts, no news was brought of the gathering or lurking foe. The seribas were not quite finished, but the working portion of the men had nearly completed them—those who were resting lay beside their piled arms smoking pipes or drinking coffee by the camp fires. The camels and baggage animals, which had been unladen in the central seriba, had been taken out and formed in the open ground in a column facing Suakim. Perhaps two-thirds of the force were under arms or resting on their arms, but no attack was anticipated; the men were tired, and all was going easily when a sudden cry, a shriek, a yell was heard in the rear of the mass of camels and baggage animals, and a black swarm of Arabs was seen, their gleaming swords and spears hacking and stabbing, amidst frantic cries which were soon answered by the shouts of our men, who, though taken unaware, showed admirable promptitude and decision. The vast mass of animals, startled by the onslaught, stampeded and went at a mad rush towards Suakim, carrying with them the host of drivers and a few of the regulars, who could not disentangle themselves from the midst of the beasts and were obliged to go with them; some of the officers and men, however, disengaged themselves and returned. The videttes rode in hastily to report the advance of the enemy, who were, however, already leaping into the clearing before more could be done by the general and his officers than to shout to the men to stand to arms. Amidst the stampeding transport animals, the Arabs were leaping about, slashing the

poor brutes or hamstringing them, and cutting down drivers or fugitives as they went. Mounted officers leaped their horses into the seribas, but the men were already there, and those who were at work, having snatched their arms from the pile, were soon firing at the advancing Arabs. Some of the enemy had sprung into the seriba where the marines were placed, but so quick were the men that, though they had to take their arms from the pile, not a single Arab remained standing, and not one could afterwards approach near to the hedge. The Berkshire men, who were at work, were equally prompt, snatched their arms, stood in a small square, and kept off the yelling foe by a steady fire, after which they were able to help their comrades to keep the southernmost seriba.

The working parties had scarcely time to fall back inside the seribas, and many gathered in groups outside to withstand the torrent of the assailants. Others faced them across the large gaps which still remained in the works, especially in the large seriba defended by the Indian infantry, who were practically obliged to stand their ground without defence. The redoubt in the apex of the southern work, where two Gardners were placed, was still unfinished, but the Gardners were worked until, after a few rounds, they got jammed, and the Arabs poured in, killing Lieutenant Seymour of the *Dolphin*, in charge of the guns, and six of the blue-jackets, and wounding fourteen others. A hundred and ten of the Arabs then pressed into the seriba, but not one survived to tell the tale of their hand-to-hand fight with the 49th; their bodies were counted as they lay at the end of the fight. The 49th fought with splendid courage and coolness, their steady fire not only sweeping away those who had entered the seriba, but repulsing all further attempts of the Arabs to enter the inclosure. The Indian infantry in the large seriba fought at a great disadvantage. Not only were the lines of fencing unfinished, but the baggage animals were at first between them and the enemy, and so hindered the fire of the defenders, and as the Arabs charged down many of the panic-stricken camels, horses, and mules rushed through the gaps into the seriba, creating the utmost confusion, and carrying the soldiers before them. Nevertheless, the Sikhs of the 28th Native Infantry stood their ground manfully, mowing down the enemy with their volleys, and when most severely pressed boldly charging them with the bayonet. The 17th Native Regiment, however, wavered, and, partly carried away by the stampede of the transport animals, fell back, firing wildly. Many of them rushed headlong for shelter into the northern seriba, almost driving in our marines. The marines, however, defended their lines as steadily as if these had been the bulwarks of a ship, but although never once broken or driven back a foot they did not come out of the fray scatheless, as six were killed and nineteen wounded.

The first wild rush of the enemy checked, the position was safe, and now rapid volleys were poured from the faces of each of the seribas into

the crowded enemy, whilst a rain of bullets from the two Gardner guns at the redoubt, commanded by Lieutenant Paget, at the apex of the northern seriba, mowed wide gaps in the masses of the Arabs as these charged along the front.

The fire was too terrible to be withstood, and the natives fell back to the bushes, where their chiefs strove to re-form them for a second onslaught. Few, however, responded to the call, and soon all who were able to retreat disappeared among the bushes. The whole affair lasted but twenty minutes. There were a few minutes of confused but desperate fighting, of hand-to-hand struggle and imminent danger, five minutes of a terrible sweeping fire into the masses of the enemy, and a few minutes longer completed their dispersal after they began to recoil from the front. For a time nothing could be seen, so dense were the clouds of smoke and sand-dust that covered the scene of conflict. Then, when the air cleared, it could be seen how great was the destruction which had been wrought. The whole space which had been cleared of bush for the construction of the seribas was thickly strewn with dark bodies, varied here and there by those of soldiers overtaken before they gained the inclosure, and by the transport animals which had fallen under the cross-fire to which they were exposed. Over a thousand of the Arabs lay dead around our seribas. Their fanatic courage and the manner in which they flung themselves into the face of death called forth the admiration of our troops; but the same fanaticism caused them neither to give nor to accept quarter; they would feign death that they might spring up and stab a man or hamstring a horse, and it was dangerous to go out to examine their slain lest a seeming corpse should start up and spear the nearest of our men. Several boys of from ten to twelve years of age and some women were found among the corpses. Taking the number who must have fallen in the bush, or have crawled there to die, there can be no doubt that the loss of the enemy exceeded fifteen hundred, including many of their most valiant chiefs. Our victory, however, was by no means cheaply won. Our total loss in the three seribas was, of British, seven officers and sixty-three men killed, and six officers and eighty-nine men wounded, while the casualties of the Indian infantry amounted to about eighty. This did not constitute the entire loss of the force, for a great many followers were killed in the stampede outside the seriba and in the flight to Suakim.

Among our officers killed were Captain Van Beverholt of the 17th Native Regiment, Lieutenant Swinton of the Berkshire, Lieutenant Seymour; and of the engineers, Lieutenant Newman and Captain Romilly, the latter one of the Romilly's of the old Huguenot family which has been so distinguished in English history.

The hussars, who were patrolling between the seriba and Suakim, were met on their return march to the latter place by some of the 9th Bengal



Cavalry, and hearing the firing behind them turned and hastened back, so that they met a number of the baggage animals, drivers, camp-followers, and a few English soldiers and native infantry in flight towards Suakim, pursued by Arabs who were cutting them down without resistance. Half the cavalry, therefore, dismounted, and fired volleys to check the Arabs' pursuit, then mounted and drove them before them, and being afterwards joined by a squadron of the 5th Lancers, were able to prevent the attempt of the enemy to creep round by the sea-coast and turn their flank, and to push the Arabs back towards the seriba, where, being enfiladed by the fire of our men, they dispersed towards the sea.

There were a great many wounded on our side, and the work of the doctors was very arduous. They saw to their patients under shelter of the telegraph wagon, while the intelligence was being wired to headquarters and the special correspondents and artists were scribbling and sketching as the horrible turmoil raged around. A message was sent back from Suakim, that the guards were coming out to aid the force at the seriba, and General M'Neill telegraphed that the enemy had been repulsed. At 11.30 A.M. on the 22d General Graham himself arrived with the guards with fresh stores and water. At 2 P.M. the Indians and grenadier guards moved off on their return, forming a large square inclosing the camels and the dhoolies with the wounded.

This battle may be said to have been the last important engagement which was fought by our troops in the Suakim expedition. It virtually closed the campaign, for it was discovered that it had, for the time, completely discomfited Osman Digma, and scattered, if it had not altogether shattered his forces. As Sir Michael Hicks Beach afterwards said when proposing the vote of thanks to the army: "It is not too much to say that the power of Osman Digma had been absolutely crushed."

The seriba having been left in the occupation of such a considerable force it was determined to push on preparations for the further advance on Tamai, and convoys were sent from Suakim with large supplies of water and provisions, that the forces might be well able to proceed from Tofrek, the place where the seriba was established. The enemy, notwithstanding the crushing defeat which they had experienced, continued to carry on desultory hostilities, and the convoys had some sharp tussles with parties of Arabs, who swarmed in the thick bushes and scrub. The captive war-balloon, made of gold-beater's skin, was now of service for surveying the surrounding country. It was filled at the water fort from tubes of compressed gas, which had been brought from Chatham. It weighed only 90 lbs., and contained 7000 cubic feet of gas. Its diameter was 23 feet, the basket being large enough to hold one man conveniently. When inflated it was attached by a fine wire-rope to a wagon, and communication was maintained by means of notes attached to a string. The work of conveying

the water and stores to the seriba was arduous and exhausting, but it was done; and the condition of the men was the more precarious, because the tainted atmosphere at the seriba was now even worse than that at Suakim in consequence of the number of dead and the masses of slaughtered beasts, the camels having to be cut open in order that the carcasses might be more readily dried by the intense heat.

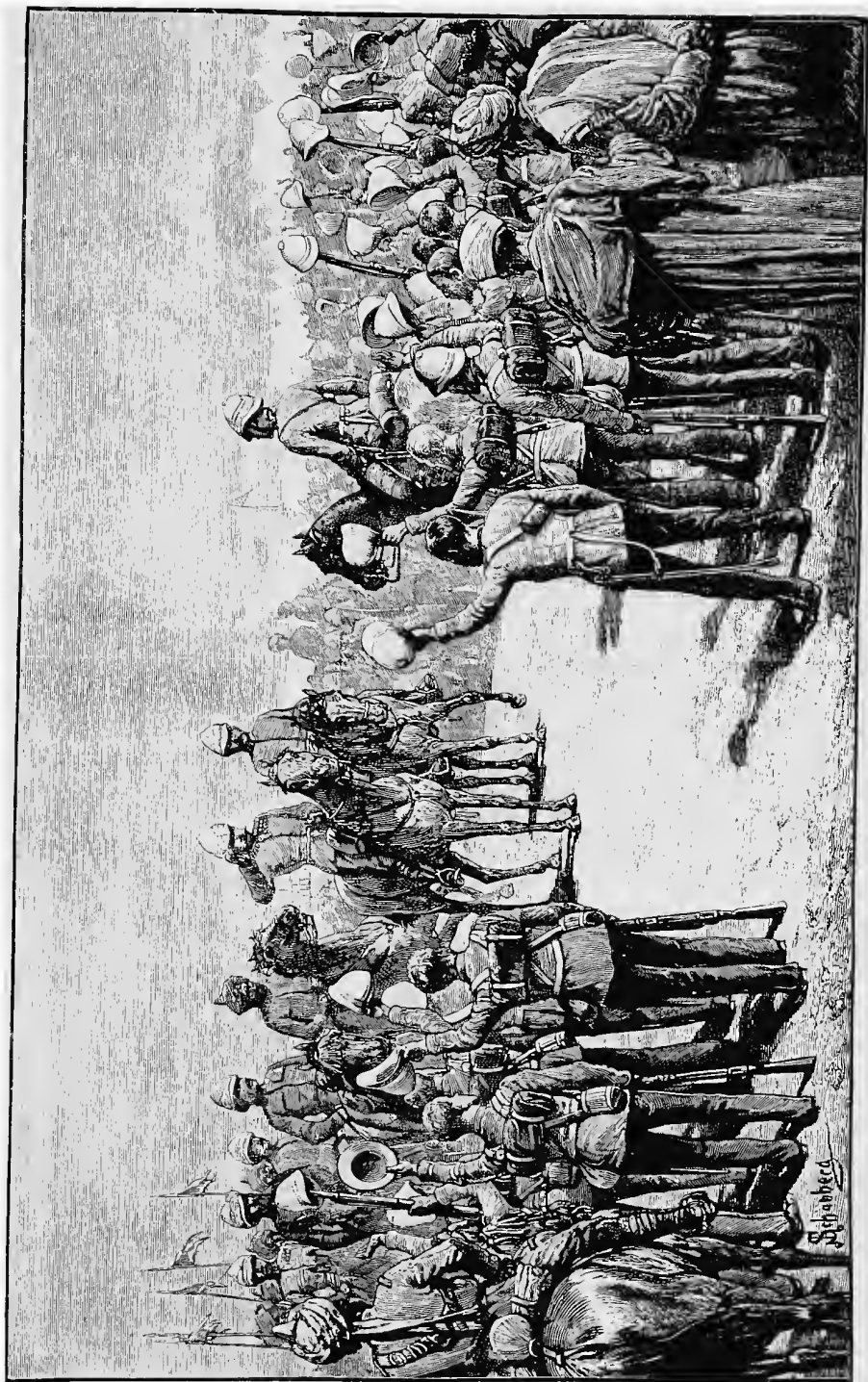
The advance to Tamai was ordered for the 1st of April, and on Sunday the 29th of March (it is remarkable how many battles have been fought and how many events in warfare have occurred on a Sunday), the whole camp at Suakim was in a state of excitement because of the landing of the Australian contingent. They were received with the utmost enthusiasm, and no wonder, for it would have been difficult to find a finer set of men. Their robust physique, their evident fitness, and their mature strength elicited the admiration of the officers who received them, and of the men, who gave them a hearty welcome as trusted comrades.

It was an historical event, and as the men landed at Quarantine Island they cordially responded to the cheers of the sailors on the vessels in the harbour.

The troops consisted of 28 officers, 500 privates, 33 men of the ambulance corps, and 30 of the artillery, Colonel Richardson commanding the whole. All the infantry wore scarlet tunics and white helmets, with black valises, and carried converted rifles of Henry's patent. The artillerymen had repeating carbines. The contingent drew up in line two deep on the shore of the island, and was eagerly scanned by the crowd which occupied all the points of vantage on the piles of commissariat stores. Headed by the fife-and-drum bands of the East Surrey Regiment and the King's (Shropshire Light Infantry), the Australians then marched over the causeway to the camp; the whole route being lined with an extraordinary heterogeneous gathering, which was in itself a remarkable sight—Indians of the native contingent, privates of English regiments, Arabs of the town, camel-drivers, sailors, camp-followers, and Greeks—all gathered together to witness the arrival of the new-comers. And with almost the same enthusiasm the English soldiers in camp greeted the familiar scarlet. Scarlet was, however, a rare colour in Suakim. The officers rode out to see the column, the passing camel convoys were halted, and the pickets and guards turned out.

General Graham met the Australians *en route* and introduced himself. On arriving at the outskirts of the camp the men formed line and gave a general salute. Sir G. Graham then rode down the line, front and rear, of the contingent, which afterwards formed three sides of a square, while the general addressed them, saying:—

"Men of New South Wales,—In the name of the forces under my command I give you a hearty welcome as comrades and brothers in



THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT AT SUAKIM.  
MEETING OF COLONEL RICHARDSON AND LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR G. GRAHAM, MARCH, 1885.



arms who have come hither to share in the perils and toils, and we hope also the glories of this campaign. Those who are engaged in the present expedition are proud to bear with you the name of Englishmen, for you belong as much as we do to that glorious nation on which it has been said the sun never sets, and we hope that our freedom will shine for ever, as the sun upon our people. The heart of every Englishman beats high at the magnanimous spirit of our colonies—that spirit which knits us together as members of one great empire to maintain our honour. We honour the feeling which led you to leave your pleasant homes, your wives, your children, and your friends, to share the perils of this dreary war against the desert and its savages. We know you will cheerfully submit to those privations, as all your comrades here have had to do. You must know that severe discipline is absolutely necessary to the safety of an army in the field, and you will submit to that discipline as much in the work you will have to do as in actual fighting. The eyes of all English-speaking races, and indeed the eyes of the whole civilized world, are upon you, and I am certain that you will uphold the honour of the empire. I feel proud to command such a force, and am sure it will do the greatest credit to New South Wales and to the race of which you are an important part."

Reconnaissances having been made the force advanced, as ordered, on the 1st of April with the necessarily large transport service, leaving only about 3000 men of various battalions to protect Suakim with four screw mountain-guns and the Australian artillery, all the remainder of the field force being either on the march or at the seriba. The total strength of the advancing fighting force was 8175 officers and men and 1361 horses. On the 2d, after a difficult journey through the bush, a large seriba was formed in the centre of the group of the Tselah Hills, whence the scattered villages of New Tamai could be seen hardly two miles distant. The whole force with followers amounted to 10,000 men, provisions and water for whom had to be conveyed by the transports. It was soon evident, however, that Osman Digma did not mean to risk another battle, and though desultory firing from parties of Arabs in the ravines and gullies was continued at intervals, and some of our men were hit, two of the Australians being wounded, it was soon evident that the enemy were unable to oppose any serious resistance to the advance of the force, which was continued through the recently-deserted villages. The movements of our troops were so directed as to endeavour to draw the Arabs from their positions, but they were evidently not able to venture a regular engagement, and, as they continued to retire, and it would have been fruitless to follow Osman Digma into the mountains without supplies of water for the transport, the withdrawal of the force by alternate brigades was ordered. New Tamai was destroyed along with considerable quantities

of the enemy's ammunition which were found there, and the huts, including Osman Digma's residence, were burned.

On the 4th of April the force had again reached Suakim, and it was then that attention was turned to the continuation of the railway, the work of which had been stopped on the 22d of March for the purpose of advancing against Osman Digma. An advanced seriba was to be established five miles on the road to Handoub to cover the head of the railway, which was to be pushed on as fast as possible, and a block-house and another seriba was to be formed at Handoub itself five miles further on, while covering parties were to protect the head of the line as it advanced.

Of course this all meant more convoys with transport of provisions and water. By the 7th of April General Fremantle, with the Coldstreams, Australians, some engineers, and screw-guns, established the first post, and then and afterwards the Australians and the Scots Guards showed remarkable powers of endurance on the hot and exhausting march. The country was open, the Scots Guards were left at the first seriba, the Australians and Coldstreams advanced to Handoub, where the seriba was constructed near an old well, some other wells being scraped or dug in the Khor. The country presented a broad expanse of sand and shingle about ten miles in circumference, encircled by barren hills, and containing some light bushes and scrub with here and there piles of boulders. General Graham visited the station, and the transport camels retired to Suakim under escort.

A proclamation was issued to the enemy calling on them to submit, but without any obvious result. Osman's force seemed to be broken, and a number of his chief officers had been killed. The weaker tribes were shifty and uncertain. Hasheen was deserted. A week of hard work ensued, when the following telegram was received by Lord Wolseley on the 15th. "Proposed Suakim policy. Construction of railway to any considerable distance to be postponed, pending further consideration. Suakim to be held for present; and any position in neighbourhood necessary for protection from constant attack. Report on point to which railway should proceed, and instruct Graham . . . not to enter into engagements with tribes inconsistent with this policy." This was a reply to a former question of General Graham, whether he might give assurance to wavering sheikhs of protection against Osman Digma, and whether he could state that the English would not go away as they had done on the previous year. Evidently the campaign in the Soudan was approaching the end.

On the 13th a reconnaissance had been made from Handoub to Otao, eight miles further, where two wells were found with a fair supply of water; and on the 16th the Scots Guards, with two guns, a squadron

of cavalry, and a company of engineers, went and formed a camp or rather an advanced post there. On the 18th a reconnaissance was made to Deberet, and a column from Handoub, composed of Australians, guns, and mounted infantry, co-operated by advancing on Deberet through the Waratab Hills, while a third column from Otao operated towards the same point. A few parties of the enemy were seen retiring, but no resistance was attempted.

On the 19th the Scots Guards, with two guns and a company of engineers, were sent to Tambouk, six miles beyond Otao, to occupy the wells; but nothing was seen of the enemy, though the seriba at Tambouk was fired into on the 23d without any injury being done. Some of the friendlies arrived there with the camel corps, and encamped outside the seriba. On the night of the 26th firing was resumed by the enemy both at Tambouk and Otao, and the telegraph was cut. On the 28th they had scraped some holes under the sleepers of the railway and set fire to them, and an ambuscade was consequently set to watch the line, and an armoured train was ordered to patrol it after dark. General Graham had sent a message to Lord Wolseley urging the desirability of still further crushing the power of Osman Digma before withdrawing, as the force could operate on Sinkat and Tamanieb from Tambouk and Suakim; but there was a report that Lord Wolseley would soon be on his way to Suakim, and it was understood that the campaign, if not the further occupation of the Soudan, would soon be over. Eighteen miles and three quarters of the projected railway had been laid from Suakim to Otao, at a cost of over £850,000. Osman Digma had been at all events temporarily crippled, and the tribes were falling away from him; the adherents of the Mahdi at Kordofan were diminishing in number by internal dissensions, and, as we have seen, there were reasons which induced the government to regard these as sufficient grounds for proclaiming a return to the original policy of non-intervention in the provinces which they had at first advised the khedive to abandon.

The deficit on the financial statement for the year arising from unexpected demands for Egypt was £3,732,000, and Mr. Gladstone, in committee of supply, after stating the reasons for asking for a vote of credit of eleven millions, had intimated that further operations in the Soudan would cease, and that the strength of the empire would be made available in other quarters should it become necessary. The railway had been carried forward, but the heat of the climate was almost unbearable, and there was great danger of an army dwindling away by sickness, increased by the fatigue of a harassing campaign.

On the 2d of May Lord Wolseley arrived at Suakim. Some fighting continued with moving bodies of the enemy, and two columns, with about 400 friendlies, marched to Shakool, ten miles south of Otao, to attack a

body of Arabs who were under a lieutenant of Osman Digma, and who, with their leader, fled on our approach, and were driven over the hills, leaving the valley in our hands without any stubborn resistance. About 100 of the enemy who fired upon our men from the hills were killed, and nearly 2000 sheep and goats, besides camels and donkeys, were taken; the friendlies having rendered good service by acting with the mounted infantry from Otao. This body of Arabs who had been defeated were they who had fired on Otao and Tambouk, had burned the sleepers of the railway, and had kept Osman Digma supplied with provisions while they menaced our outposts with the only organized force in the district.

Till the 16th of May Lord Wolseley was busily inspecting the line and all the post arrangements. The men were permitted to have a little rest, though it was reported that another expedition in force against Osman was to be made and there were preparations for transport. On the 8th the commander-in-chief held a review of all the troops at Suakim. The martial spectacle of the march past and the glittering arms and accoutrements under the early morning sun was a splendid spectacle from a military point of view: the guards, the Sikhs, and the Australians being particularly noticeable for their admirable order and steadiness. On the same evening it was known that there would be no further expedition. The medical officers had strongly deprecated the continued marches in such a climate at that season, and there was reason to fear that if the exertion were prolonged the mortality would be appalling, for sickness was already spreading rapidly, fever of a typhoid character was increasing, the hospitals were filling, and a heavy rain which fell on the night of the 9th had brought out the foul odours from the sand and showed what a pestilential area the camp had become.

Yes, the campaign was at an end. Officers on the sick-list or among the wounded were being conveyed to the vessels that are to take them home to recover or to die. General Graham and his staff embarked in the *Deccan* on the 17th, after having bidden farewell to his troops. The *Jumna*, with the guards, left on the same day. Lord Wolseley followed in the *Queen* two days afterwards. He had issued an address to the troops, in which he said, "the deeds of the force in the Soudan have added one more chapter to the glorious record of our national prowess."

The Australians, after seven weeks of good service, were ordered home. They had taken their part in the skirmishing, the marching, the holding of the seribas, the advance against the enemy, the privations in that burning climate. After reviewing them in company with General Graham, General Greaves, Lord Charles Beresford, and the staff, Lord Wolseley had addressed them, speaking highly of their soldierly appearance and of the fitness of the artillery which had just arrived at camp after a long march; he also said:—



"Although I was conducting operations in a distant part of the Soudan, I felt great pride in the thought that I had under my command a contingent of colonial troops, and my pride was the greater that they represented such a vast portion of the British Empire as Australia. I also feel that Australia, putting such a fine body of troops in the field, is a warning to any quarrelsome nation that they will have to fight not only Great Britain and Ireland, but also England's most distant colonies." Two days afterward, on May 17th, the contingent re-embarked on board the troopship *Arab*, on which, at the imperial expense, they were conveyed back to Sydney.

Lord Wolseley's farewell despatch, which reached the troops before their departure, contained the following passage:—"I thank the gallant soldiers of the New South Wales contingent, not only for the services they have rendered, but for the sympathy which prompted them to come so far to take part in a war undertaken by the empire to which we all belong. They will carry home with them the thanks of our sovereign and the best wishes of those with whom they fought side by side. They have borne themselves well in action and camp, and I trust that should any serious war be forced on our empire in the future we may again find ourselves shoulder to shoulder with Australian troops facing a common enemy. The deeds of the forces in the Soudan have added one more chapter to the glorious records of national prowess, and all of you who have belonged to it—soldiers or sailors, British, Indian, or Australian—may feel with pride the high reputation the army and navy has gained has not suffered at your hands."

A farewell message from her Majesty the Queen was also received, as follows:—"The queen commands to be conveyed to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the New South Wales contingent her thanks for their services during the recent campaign, and expresses her great satisfaction that her colonial forces have served side by side with British troops in the field. Her Majesty wishes them a prosperous voyage home."

When the Australian contingent re-entered Sydney on the 19th of June they had lost six of their number by death. The reception accorded to them by their fellow-countrymen and the people of Sydney was most enthusiastic, and their arrival was celebrated by a ceremonial reception by the governor, the ministry, and representatives of the sister colonies. After this there were congratulatory meetings, and, to crown the whole, a banquet in honour of the contingent by the citizens of Sydney.

There is no need to follow the successive withdrawals of troops as different regiments or battalions were recalled during the months that ensued. Returning to the policy of assisting the Egyptian government to

protect the boundaries of Egypt proper at Wady Halfa and the Red Sea littoral, where Colonel Chermiside, the governor-general, had a number of Egyptian troops, our forces were being gradually but rapidly withdrawn from the Nile and the desert stations; and the war in Egypt and the Soudan was, so far as we were concerned, virtually at an end, though our few remaining troops had still to take part in occasional hostilities.

It was evident that government no longer contemplated either a continued occupation of any portion of the Soudan provinces or the retention of any large bodies of troops in Egypt itself. The financial condition of the Egyptian government was not such as to warrant the maintenance of a foreign force, and though, on the 24th of March, the chancellor of the exchequer moved for leave to bring in a bill to sanction the participation of the English government in an international Egyptian loan of £9,000,000, and the bill was passed through the Lords' committee a month afterwards, the tenure of the Liberal ministry was drawing to a close. In the month of June Lord Salisbury's government succeeded to office, and the then impending general election took place in August, the Conservatives returning to power in the new parliament.

When once the policy of evacuating the Soudan and Dongola and gradually withdrawing troops from Egypt had been declared there was a considerable movement of our forces. The Black Watch went to Wady Halfa, and other changes were made which left Sir F. Stephenson, who was in command in Egypt, a much-diminished army with which to operate at various points.

At Suakim some efforts were made to induce the friendly and neutral tribes to give allegiance to the British, and, of course, it was determined to hold Suakim though the landing of railway plant and material was suspended. Lord Wolseley had as early as the 16th of April sent a long despatch to Lord Hartington remonstrating against evacuating the Soudan and abandoning the intention of proceeding actively against the Mahdi or rather Mahdiism, and especially of retiring from the province of Dongola, the possession of which he (Lord Wolseley) declared meant supremacy and power. He concluded that as it was the intention of the government to maintain British garrisons in Egypt till such time as the country was strong enough to stand by itself, we were bound to prevent its falling a prey to the Mahdi or any other invader; and he argued that this could only be effectually achieved by advancing, as originally intended, and destroying his power in the neighbourhood of Khartûm. He declared it to be his opinion that the struggle with Mahdiism must come sooner or later, and that, if we allowed all that had been done to go for nothing, and tried to stave off the final struggle for a few years, those years would be years of struggle and disturbance for Egypt, of burden and strain to our military resources, with the result that the contest that must come in the

end would be no less than those that confronted us at the time that he wrote.

But the policy of withdrawal had been decided upon, and was continued when Lord Salisbury's government came into power, Sir Henry Drummond Woolf being appointed to proceed on a special mission to Egypt, Sir E. Baring and other high officials at Cairo returning to London. The results of Sir H. D. Woolf's mission and of his communications with the government of the sultan at Constantinople have yet to be made known; and the government of Lord Salisbury, considering the condition of the country, and especially of Dongola, where there were no supplies and to hold which would have necessitated a fresh expedition, were not prepared to check the evacuation of the provinces, though desultory hostilities continued to be carried on at intervals in the territory beyond Suakim.

At the end of July reports that the Mahdi had died from smallpox on the 29th of June were confirmed. He was taken ill on the 5th and died on the 8th day of Ramadan, but it was believed from the description of the disorder that his death was the result of spotted typhus caused by the pestiferous atmosphere of Khartûm, where the dead were allowed to remain unburied after the fall of the town.

He had appointed four khalifs, Abdullah, Osman Digma, a Soudanese sheikh, and the Sheikh El Senoussi, who declined the honour. The followers of Abdullah proclaimed him the successor to the Mahdiship. He was an able and unscrupulous leader, but being only the sheikh of an insignificant tribe the chiefs of the great tribes refused to follow him as ruler, and fresh complications ensued.

Late in August the report of Lord Wolseley on the Soudan campaign was published, and a large number of decorations, promotions, and rewards to officers and men specially mentioned were granted.

General Sir F. Stephenson and General Grenfell were actively employed on the frontier of Egyptian territory, but at Sennâr and elsewhere the opposition of the sheikhs to Abdullah and Mahdiism had succeeded in diminishing the power of the rebel leaders. Interest became chiefly directed to Suakim, where Colonel Chermiside was in communication with Ras Aloula, who with a large Abyssinian force marched to the relief of Kassala, and meeting Osman Digma's army at Sufeit, where the Arabs were strongly fortified, fought a great battle, in which 3000 of the Arabs and Osman Digma himself were reported to have been slain.

In the early days of December, however, reports from Wady Halfa again directed notice to the forces occupying posts on the Nile. On the right or east bank of the Nile, about ninety miles south of Wady Halfa, is a place called Ginnis. The intervening territory is barren and desolate, and only a few poor and wretched Arabs were to be found there; but the Nile Valley Railway, which at the close of the Khartûm campaign had

been extended only to Akasheh, thirty miles south of Sarras, had been afterwards carried to Firket, south of the Dal Cataracts. Five miles south of Firket is Mograkeh, and two miles north of that, Kosheh, which was our furthest outpost. A body of the rebel Arabs coming to meet our troops had crossed the river and had strips of fertile land at their backs from which to draw supplies, while provisions for our force had to be taken by rail from Wady Halfa, whence they had come from Cairo. The enemy had been harassing our forts with artillery and rifle fire under cover of the rocky hills and sand-banks, and had concentrated at Ginnis. General Grenfell as division commander, and Generals Butler and Huyshe (the latter the officer who commanded the Berkshires at General M'Neill's seriba) each leading a brigade, determined on an advance. The Cameron Highlanders and two Egyptian battalions were engaged, the latter being chiefly black troops. Three columns approached by different routes, and after shelling the huts in front of Kosheh, the stern-wheel steamer turning her batteries on the rebels in the huts at Ginnis, a rush was made from the hills by the Highlanders, a few other British troops, and the black battalion, who cleared out the rebels near to Kosheh, while Butler's brigade swept on and attacked the enemy at Ginnis, where the second brigade joined them, and the place was carried after a stubborn fight, the routed Arabs retreating to the south, leaving their camp, much ammunition, and twenty standards. It was believed that nearly seven thousand Arabs had concentrated there, and a large number were killed in the engagement.

With this battle ended the year 1885, and early in 1886 arrangements were in progress to advance on the Nile line and occupy the posts with Egyptian troops. Meantime the rebels at Suakim found themselves opposed by the friendlies of the tribes who had given in their allegiance to Colonel Chermiside. The friendlies of the Amara tribe continued to fight Osman Digma's followers successfully, and in June it was reported that they had occupied Handoub, and that Osman Digma, who took too good care of himself to be killed, was at Tamai, where it was expected a fight would shortly take place.

During the succeeding months till October various and contradictory rumours were heard, but there seemed to be little doubt that in the southern provinces the Arabs chiefs and their followers were fighting amongst themselves, and there were not wanting some evidences that the rebellion would end in desultory hostilities among the tribes, amidst which some overtures for a restoration of a regular government might be obtained.

The tangled question of Egyptian finance and of impending bankruptcy were mooted over and over again, but the financial schemes which were discussed, and those portions of them which were eventually adopted—and are perhaps destined soon to be superseded by the result of the mission



CAPTURE OF TAMAI BY "FRIENDLIES"—

EARLY MORNING. OCTOBER 7, 1886.



of Sir H. D. Woolf—do not come into these last pages of the present narrative.

The latest event which can now engage our attention may be said to conclude this story of the war in Egypt and the Soudan. On the morning of the 7th of October the "friendlies" in the district of Suakim did what had been expected of them, and captured Tamai in a desperate fight, in which two hundred of the rebel followers of Osman Digma were slain, numbers were wounded, and forty were taken prisoners.

The force of the friendlies was a small one, but they fought valorously under their leader, Ahmed. Twenty of them were killed and twenty wounded; but all the principal men of the rebels were slain, and a large amount of booty fell to the victors. Colonel Kitchener gave orders to grant quarter to everyone, and sent out a transport detachment to bring in the enemy's guns, the friendlies still pursuing the enemy. The road to Tokar was open, and the event was considered to be likely to effect the pacification of the Eastern Soudan. At that time the enemy at Dongola was said not to exceed two thousand.

As regards the British troops then in Egypt, it may be mentioned that on the 6th of July the forces were said to be as follows:—At Alexandria a battery of artillery, the 1st battalions of the Dorsetshire and Essex Regiments, and half of the 1st battalion of the King's (Shropshire Light Infantry). At Cairo three batteries of artillery, a company of engineers, the 1st battalions of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) and the Cheshire Regiment, the 2d battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, and half of the first battalion of the King's (Shropshire Light Infantry). At Assouan the 20th Hussars, two batteries of artillery, a company of Engineers, the 1st battalion of the Princess of Wales' Own (Yorkshire Regiment), and the 2d battalion of the Durham Light Infantry.

Little remains to be said. During the course of this story of a remarkable episode in English history we have made such comments as it may be hoped have served to elucidate the scope and effects of the events that have been described, and it is not within the province of the narrator (even if it would be acceptable to the reader) to say more than a few words on the probable results of the war in Egypt and the Soudan. We have not yet seen the end, or even the near consequences; but whatever may be our opinion on the subject of the occupation of Egypt, and of the expeditions which were sent to the Nile, across the desert, and to the shores of the Red Sea, one thing is certain, Egypt has been compared to a stagnant pool into which a stone being thrown, a few circling eddies rise and spread and are lost, and all remains as still and lifeless as before. But the stone that was cast into Egypt in the time of Mehemet Ali, stirred it into more than

a mere dull, dying ripple; and it may surely be said that the stone cast into Cairo after the suppression of Arabi's rebellion has awakened the slumbering life of the corrupt pool. Even those who may denounce the intervention and depreciate its probable effects, cannot altogether deny the awakening that followed the vigorous organization of a better government; the prosecution of sanitary laws previously unknown or neglected; the earnest determined efforts to ameliorate the condition of those in sickness and in prison; the stern demand for the establishment of juster tribunals and the exercise of power, with a real desire, at all events, to reform the government which had to be sustained.

It is not at all likely that the last chapter of British intervention in Egypt has been written. It is, perhaps, not improbable that the story of British interposition in the Soudan may have to be resumed; it is even possible that such interposition may be manifested not from the side of the Nile on the desert route, but from the side of Abyssinia and the Equatorial Provinces. Who can tell?



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